

Rolling Stone

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2023
ISSUE 014

AU/NZ

PLUS

—
Abbie
Chatfield

—
Australia's
Water Crisis

—
Artists of
Aotearoa

—
The Voice to
Parliament

TROYE SIVAN

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TV SHOW

2. *The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart*

This Prime Video show is not easy viewing, with decades of trauma, tragedy (and triumph) weaved throughout as it jumps forward and backward in time. It's both confronting and comforting as we see the ways women come together in the face of domestic violence. Big names like Sigourney Weaver, Leah Purcell and Asher Keddie are likely to draw people in, but you'll stick around for the twists, truths and stunning shots of the Australian landscape.

4



CONCERT

4. Delta Goodrem's *Innocent Eyes* Anniversary Tour

Who can believe it's been twenty years since Delta Goodrem's iconic *Innocent Eyes* rocketed up the charts (and stayed there). The series of concerts across Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth in September and October will see Delta performing the 23x Platinum album in its entirety. The performer has also promised some storytelling to take the audience behind-the-scenes of this game-changing album.

EVENT

3. SXSW Sydney

In October, Sydney will become the first city outside of Austin, Texas, to bring the mammoth South by Southwest (SXSW) festival to life. The CBD, as well as areas including Haymarket, Darling Harbour, Ultimo and Chippendale will host talks from thinkers, creators and innovators, as well as performances, premieres, exhibitions, meet-ups and showcases. It kicks off on October 15.

GETAWAY

5. SO/ Auckland

Want an international holiday that's not on the other side of the world? Why not see what the amazing Auckland has to offer? Whatever vibe you're after — natural wonders, adventure, food and wine, pure escapism — Auckland caters to it. The perfect place to recuperate between whale watching trips, hikes and shopping (or simply a place to rest up between meals) is the SO/ Auckland Hotel.



7



FASHION

6. adidas Originals Eyewear from Specsavers

Streetwear meets practicality. Specsavers has taken the enduring adidas brand and produced a practical and stylish eyewear collection. The collection offers both prescription glasses and sunglasses so you can take your style to the next level.

DOCUMENTARY

7. *John Farnham: Finding The Voice*

Whether you're at a pub, a party or a live gig, when you hear the opening bars of John Farnham's "You're The Voice", you know you're in for a good time (and that you'll be giving your lungs and vocal chords a solid workout). The record-breaking documentary plays to this build-up and anticipation perfectly, charting the legend's career highs and lows, and reminding us all why the music icon deserves a special place in our hearts, minds and playlists.



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au.rollingstone.com

Contents



ISSUE 14

44

Troye Sivan

A star was born, and a superstar emerged.

By Poppy Reid

78

Abbie Chatfield

Reality Bites: What's celebrity life really like for the TV and radio star?

By Vivienne Kelly

83

The Voice to Parliament

How the Uluru Youth Network are lending their voices to The Voice.

By Sosefina Fuamoli

94

Tina Turner

The inside story of her miraculous second act.

By David Browne

ARTIST **REB FOUNTAIN**
PHOTOGRAPH BY **Chris Cuffaro**

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★ **AWARDS 2023** ★

pg24



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Contents

Opening Act

22 Sam Fischer

How the Aussie hitmaker found fame and fortune in Hollywood.

BY JAKE CHALLENGOR

Photo Essay

60 Artists of Aotearoa

Photographer Chris Cuffaro celebrates music makers from New Zealand.

BY CHRIS CUFFARO

Features

28 Kiwi Artists Tipped to Take Over

Rolling Stone unearths eight acts destined for the top of the pops.

BY CONOR LOCHRIE

36 Music of the American South

Rolling Stone takes you to the world's most iconic music exhibits in Tennessee.

BY DANICA BAKER

56 Voyager

How life has changed for the Aussie five-piece since appearing on the Eurovision stage.

BY CONOR LOCHRIE

72 Tana Douglas

From Australia to the world, meet the first female road warrior.

BY LARS BRANDLE

Departments

Letter From the Editor 20
The Last Word 114

Awards

24 Panhead Rolling Stone Aotearoa Awards

Meet the 2023 nominees vying for top honours at this year's awards.

National Affairs

88 The Future of Water

Would you drink recycled water? We'll let you in on a secret: you already are.

BY JAMES SHACKELL

Reviews

Music

105 Kim Petras' Big Move

Plus album reviews for Foley, Thy Art Is Murder, SAFIA, and more.

Film & TV

110 Harrison Ford is Back as the Tomb Raider

BY DAVID FEAR

112 Are Queer Stories Boxed in on TV?

BY EMILY ST JAMES

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Troye Sivan, photographed on 11 July 2023 at Edge Studios, Los Angeles, by **Marcus Cooper** (@maruscooper).

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44

TROYE SIVAN has reached a summit of stardom which places him in the music industry's inner sanctum.

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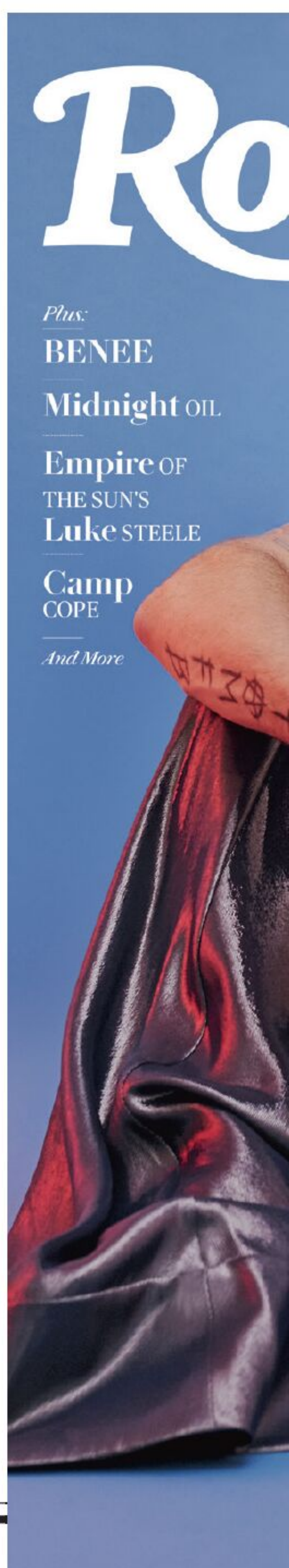


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Editor's Letter

Cover of the Rolling Stone



IT TAKES A village to fully realise each issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine. Together we discuss and debate story ideas, constantly chase longform journalism that we hope you will enjoy and, ultimately, discuss and debate with your own family, friends and co-workers. Every issue starts with a plan, a blank canvas, but it never ends that way. The further into the magazine-making process we get, as deadlines approach, the more each issue takes on a life of its own.

The one thing we can control is the cover.

It's a big deal to front *Rolling Stone*, and an even bigger deal to be anointed twice. But that's the case for Troye Sivan, who appears in 2023 as a fully realised artist. A polymath that has grown in confidence, creativity and craftsmanship right in front of our pupils.

The last time Sivan graced the cover of *Rolling Stone* was February 2016 above the headline, "He conquered the internet. Now he wants to rule the charts". A lot has changed for the gender-bending, genre-blending star of music, film and television.

Sivan is now so big that many late-comer fans, who bop along to his hits while commuting to work, wouldn't even know his career began as a YouTuber, documenting his life in the form of vlogging. But while those vlogs eventually led to a major label talent scout inking him to a global deal with EMI, it was a chapter in his life that was also riddled in darkness – a darkness that, until now at least, has largely gone unspoken.

Fast forward seven years and Troye Sivan has done so much more than just rule the charts. He's overcome adversaries. He's ruled the small screen and the box office. He's become the poster child of a generation. And he's lent his voice to the queer community. As a result, the once young boy from Perth is now approaching icon status, and, as you'll learn in this deeply revealing interview with *Rolling Stone AU/NZ*'s Editor-in-Chief, Poppy Reid, there is little that can slow him from achieving that status. The now 28-year-old Troye Sivan is a pop culture phenomenon *and* a career artist, the likes of which are now a rarity thanks to social media and radio's blatant ageism.

Elsewhere in this issue, *Rolling Stone* photographer Chris Cuffaro shares his latest photo essay capturing Artists of Aotearoa; media personality Abbie Chatfield opens up about fashion, fame and her latest TV show; "This City" hitmaker Sam Fischer talks about his long-awaited and unreleased new album and why he is living a nomadic life right now, despite a growing list of hits; First Nations voices behind the Uluru Youth Network unpack their campaign to encourage young people to rally behind The Voice to Parliament; and we introduce you to Tana Douglas, the first female road warrior who made history after landing her dream job as a roadie with AC/DC in 1973.


JAKE CHALLENGOR
EDITOR

ON THE COVER



TROYE SIVAN FOR ROLLING STONE AU/NZ

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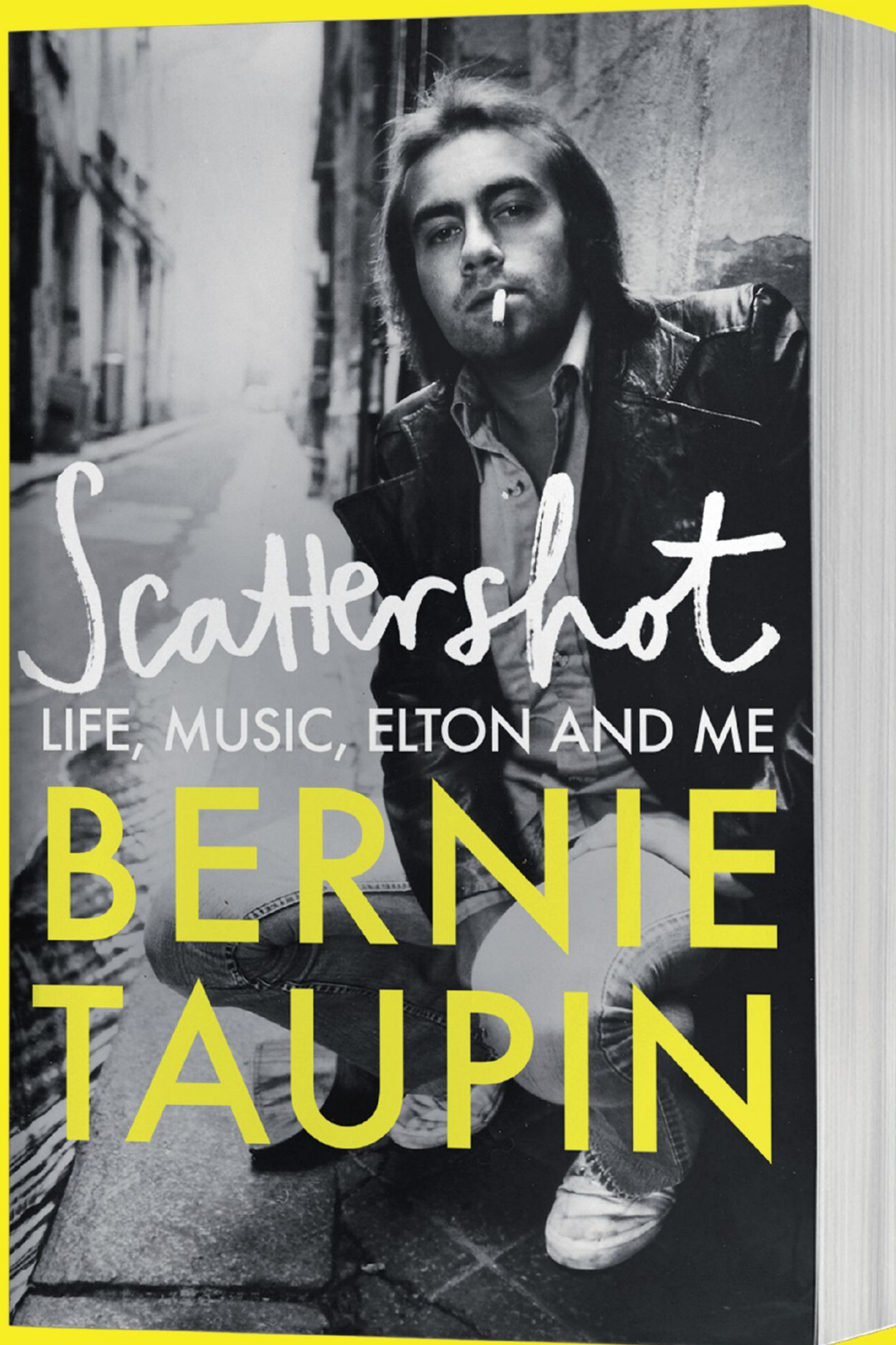
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SAM FISCHER: *The world awaits*

"IF I HAD ALL THE MONEY in the world, I'd have a place in North London by now," Aussie songwriter to the stars, Sam Fischer, tells *Rolling Stone*. Instead, he's "nomading" in Virginia, taking up residence at his wife's family home between tours.

The "This City" hitmaker can't sit still since becoming one of Australia's biggest music exports amid the global pandemic. His ode to the City of Angels went viral on TikTok during the 2020 lockdowns, bringing unexpected fame and fortune. "This City" — which is now double-Platinum — quickly stormed singles charts across global markets, landing Top 20 in England, Ireland, Sweden, Scotland, New Zealand, and Australia.

For Fischer, the lockdowns of 2020 were in Los Angeles. A city, it seems, that he hates to love, and loves to hate — which is exactly why he's on the move.

"We're just trying to avoid paying rent right now," he jokes, before admitting he has no current address and is yet to decide where to call home. What he does know is that two cities are on the cards, Sydney and London. "We'll probably do a year or two in both," he says.

It's our fifth interview together in three years. The evolution of Sam Fischer is subtle but not unmissable to the trained eye. He's clearly come to grips with stardom, successfully navigating the shift from writing hits for pop stars (Keith Urban, Demi Lovato and Jessie J among his credits), to becoming a fully-realised pop star of his own doing.

There's a new-found and growing confidence to Fischer that didn't exist when we first spoke; he's risen above the hurt,

hurdles and horrors that made his foray into the music business something of a nightmare. "LA is a bitch man," he recently told the crowd during a sold out show in Sydney. "I've been signed and I've been dropped. I've been abused in the music industry. Turns out, through lots of therapy, I wasn't the issue, so *snaps* to therapy."

One thing that hasn't changed: Sam Fischer wears his heart on his sleeve.

Today, he appears at peace with his relationship with music and business, and visibly glows when revealing to *Rolling Stone* that the release of his debut album, *I Love You Please Don't Hate Me*, is, finally, more than a decade in the making, "imminent". The album is infused with Fischer's signature lyrical waxings on the complexities of love and life, and includes his latest cut, a duet with best mate and *Australian Idol* judge, Meghan Trainor.

"[The album] is an exploration of the relationship I have with myself — the way that I am in my personal relationships and mental relationships. It really creates the sonic world that I'm excited for myself to live in, for my fans to live in, and for the live show to exist in. It's the culmination of what feels like a lifetime," he says. He confesses that his relationship to self remains a "work in progress" and "complicated", due in part to the loneliness of lockdowns and the unique experience of, in his own words, "having a global hit during a global health crisis".

WORDS BY **JAKE CHALLENGOR**

PHOTOGRAPH BY **OSCAR RYAN**





2023 ROLLING STONE AOTEAROA AWARDS

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★ AWARDS 2023 ★

The second Panhead Rolling Stone Aotearoa Awards will take place in September, paying tribute to the best and brightest in Aotearoa's music scene.



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Best Single

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lilbubblgum
“Chiropractor”



Princess Chelsea
“Forever Is a Charm”



SXMPRA
“COWBELL WARRIORS!”
(ft. Ski Mask the Slump God)



Tami Neilson
“Beyond the Stars”
(ft. Willie Nelson)



L.A.B.
“Take It Away”



Kaylee Bell
“BOOTS ‘N ALL”



Fazerdaze
“Break!”

Best Record

Nominees



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COTERIE
Coterie



Six60
Castle St



The Beths
Expert in a Dying Field



Princess Chelsea
Everything is Going to Be Alright



Marlon Williams
My Boy



Fazerdaze
Break!



Stan Walker
All In

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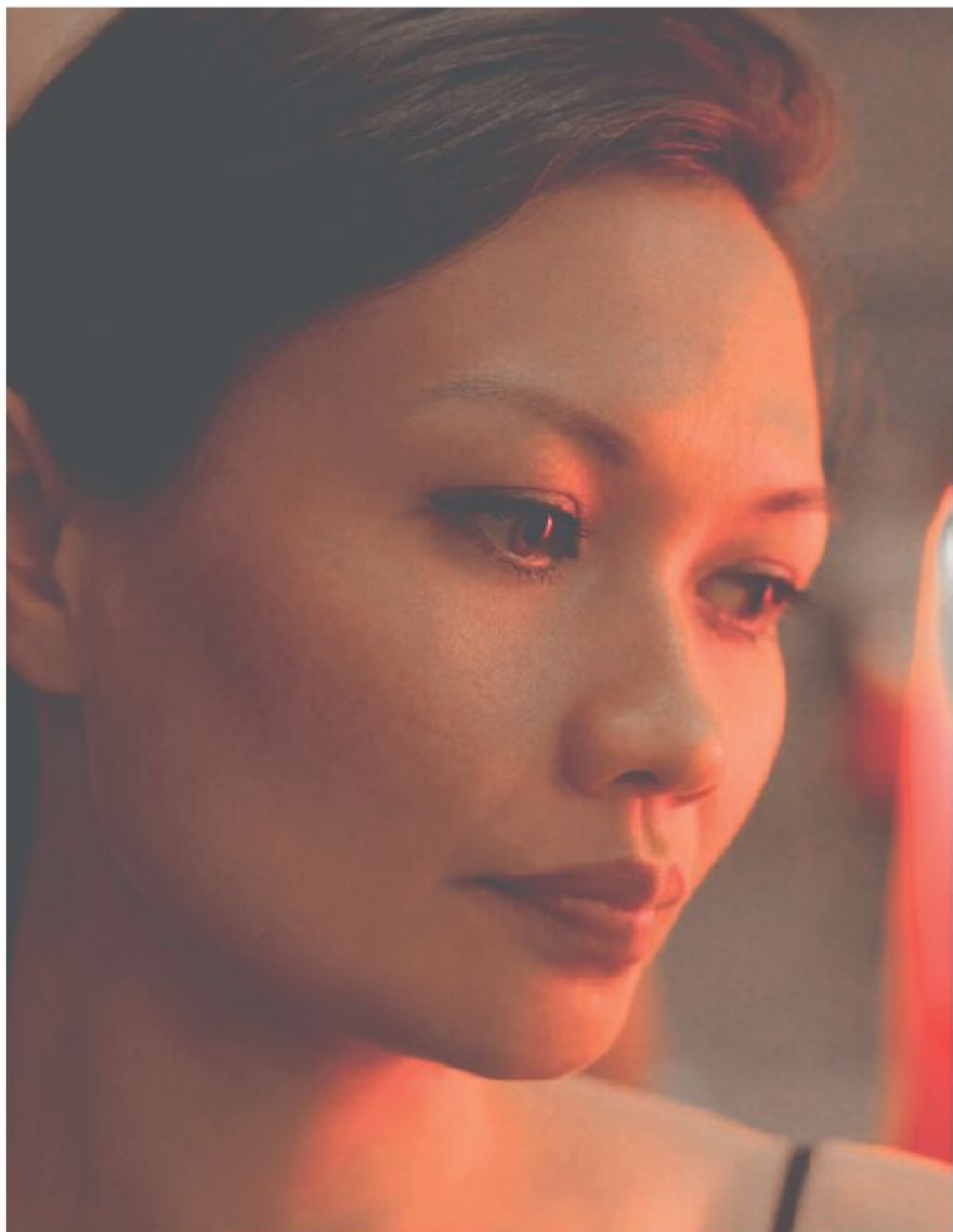
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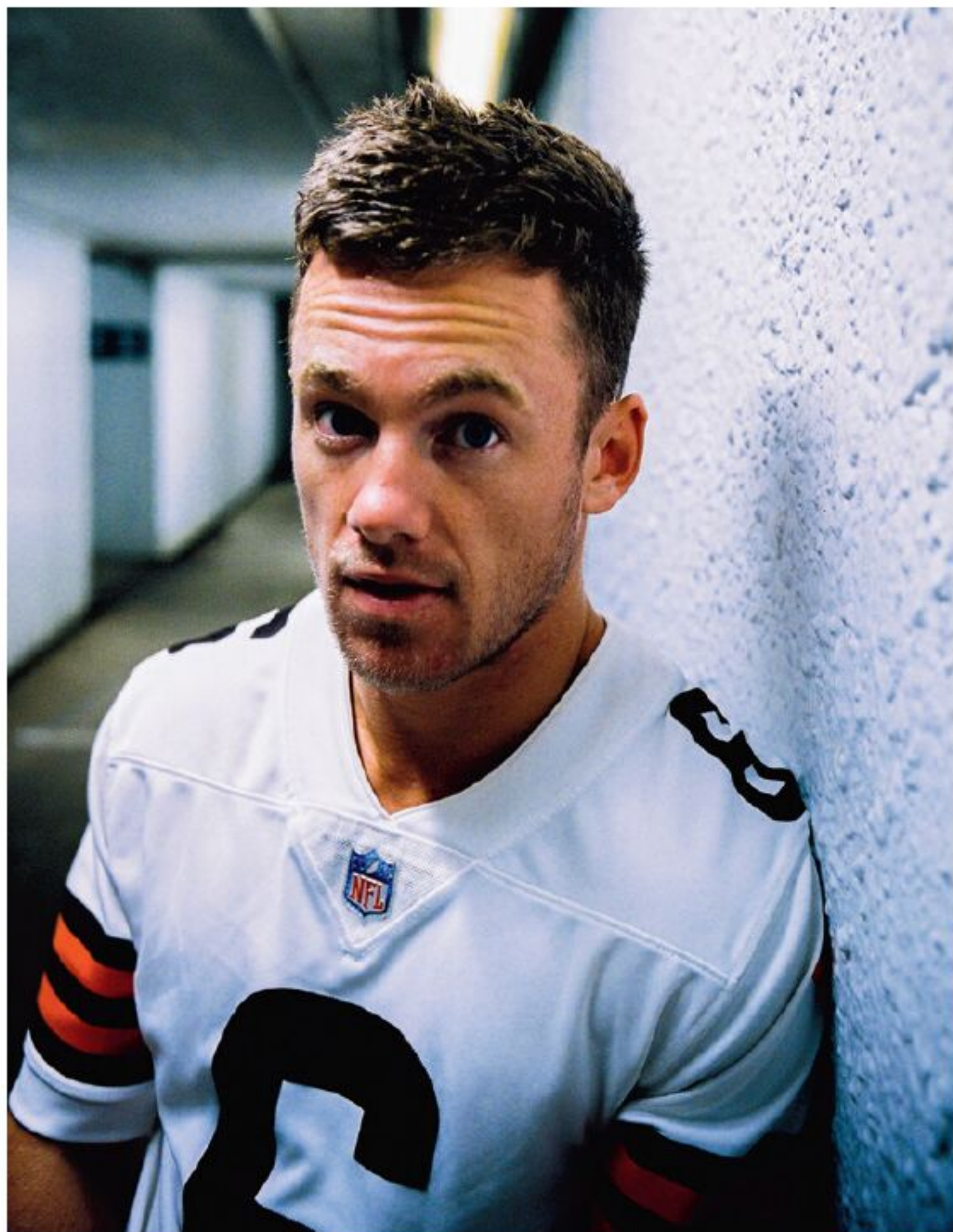
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Bic Runga



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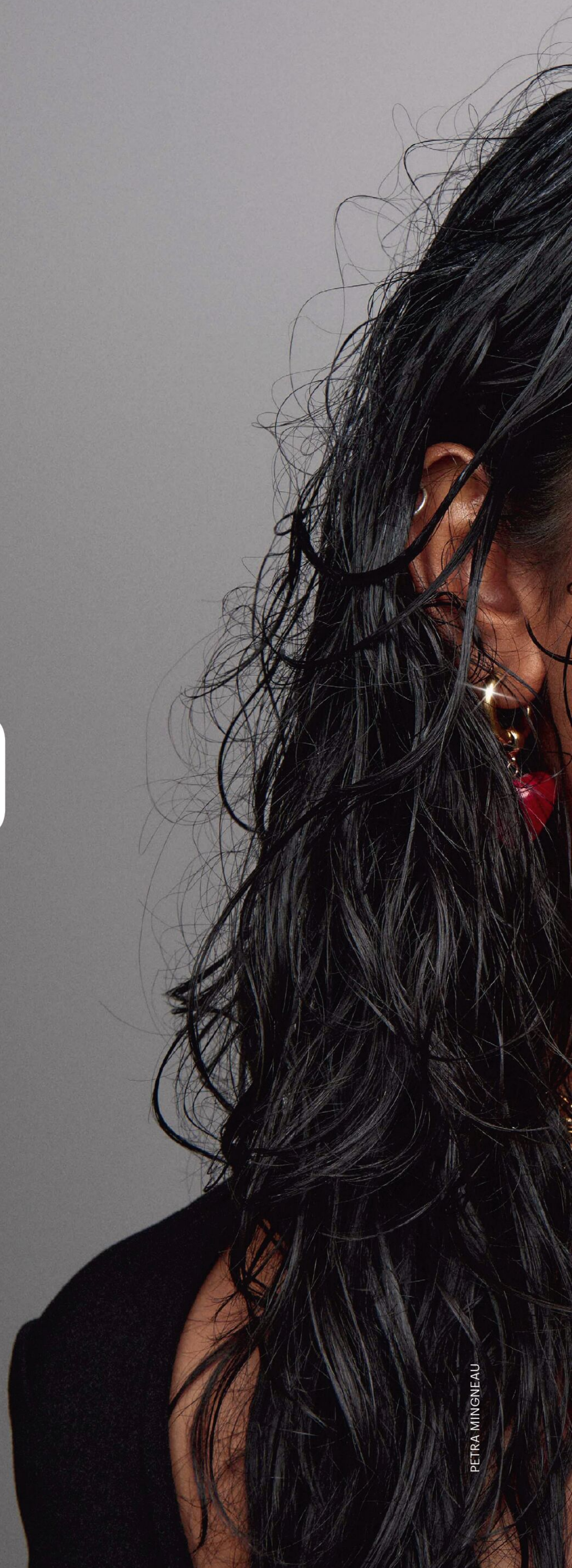
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EIGHT KIWI ARTISTS TIPPED TO TAKE OVER

From Crowded House to Lorde, The Beths to Fazerdaze, not a year goes by without a Kiwi artist or group making their mark on music's global stage. *Rolling Stone* unearths eight more Kiwi artists destined for a global chart attack.

By **CONOR LOCHRIE**





→ ASHY

Christchurch might just have a future global pop star in its midst. Chosen to showcase at SXSW, ASHY's songs are propelled by supreme self-confidence and cheeky swagger, the sound of an artist that knows this is her moment. Her debut EP, *Status*, dropped this year, filled with dazzling pop gems like "LA Talk", which wryly called out the "basic bitch" types that she's endured in the music industry. More than most, ASHY knows how meaningful it is to get to this point: the Kiwi-Indian singer isn't about to let all of this fade away, and her songs proudly explore what it means to be an artist of colour in Aotearoa today.

RS Recommends: "LA Talk"



ZARA STAPLES

➔ Rita Mae

Rita Mae comes from an Aotearoa music family, but she’s not let that fact rush her fledgling career. The daughter of late Jean-Paul Sartre Experience guitarist Jim Laing, Mae has developed her music at her own steady pace, finding a tender songwriting talent along the way. The Muriwai singer-songwriter’s debut EP, *Superfeeling*, paired soft vocals with contemplative instrumentation, Mae showing herself to be unafraid of vulnerability in the raw songs. The EP glided between melancholic indie and brooding emo pop, Mae sounding like a cool cross between BENEE and Vera Ellen. Music is in her DNA, and Mae’s future as an artist in her own right looks very bright indeed.

RS Recommends: “Sunny Afternoon”



NGARU GARLAND

➔ D.C. Maxwell

Supporting Future Islands at Powerstation is a huge career landmark for any artist, but doing it without releasing one song? That’s just showing off. Tāmaki Makaurau-based singer-songwriter D.C. Maxwell did just that earlier this year, and when he finally shared his first single, “The Leading Man”, he proved that the hype wasn’t premature at all. The track was a remarkably assured debut, Maxwell positioning himself confidently and stylishly in the spotlight, clearly eager to show what all the fuss was about. A preacher with a point to prove, he channelled Townes Van Zandt and Nick Cave on the stirring single, unwinding an enthralling narrative. Maxwell possesses an unabashedly theatrical performing style that recalls folk rock crooner Father John Misty, and New Zealand has a fascinating experimental pop artist to contend with in 2023 and beyond.

RS Recommends: “The Leading Man”

➤ Brandn Shiraz

Your favourite Kiwi rapper's favourite rapper. "If I could bet all my money on anyone, it's Shiraz," Melodownz once said of the rising Tāmaki Makaurau artist, and it was far from undue praise. Boasting a hypnotically smooth delivery and impressive consistency, Shiraz's career has been on a steady upward trajectory for a few years now. Whether he's performing alone or hooking up with another underground star like Diggy Dupé, his verses are always killer. The country's hip hop scene is thriving in 2023 thanks to performers like Shiraz.

RS Recommends: "outside outside"



LEWIS FERRIS

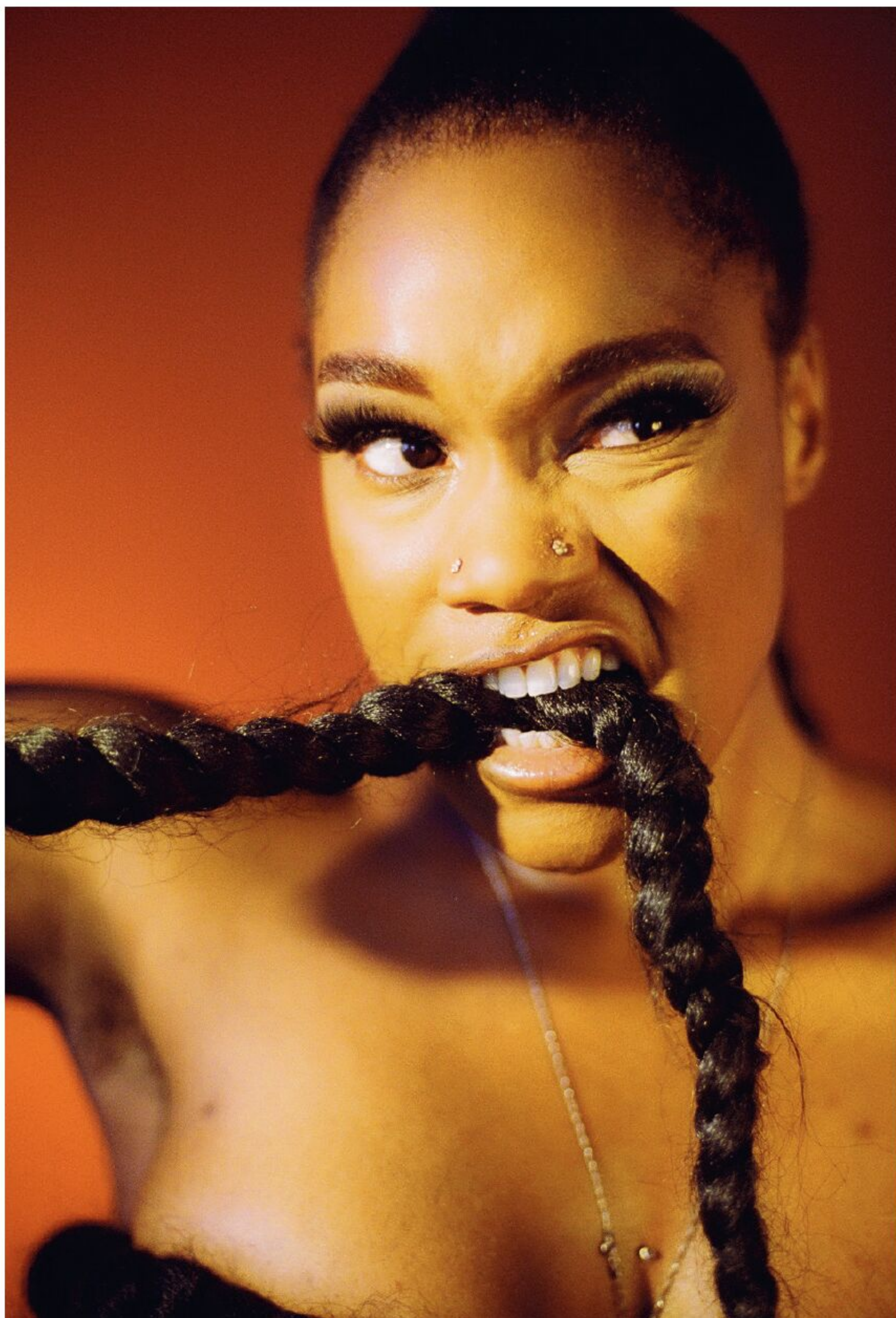
➔ Soft Plastics

Atmospheric indie-rock trio Soft Plastics were chosen to take part in the global discovery platform Ones To Watch earlier this year, and they built on that success with the release of *Saturn Return*, one of the best New Zealand albums of 2023. The band’s beautiful songs are lightly melancholic, their style wholly unhurried — a sonic balm in these hyper-digital times. A towering creation of hypnotic pacing and emotional lyricism, *Saturn Return* was a mighty impressive debut offering from the Te Whanganui-a-Tara outfit.

RS Recommends: “My World/Your Girl”



COURTNEY RODGERS



CRYSTAL CHEN

➔ Babe Martin

The project of Zoë Larsen Cumming, who spent years promoting rising Aotearoa talent on 95bFM, Babe Martin finds her exploring her own artistry with thoughtfulness and gracefulness. Her debut single under the moniker, “Knocked for Six in BHX”, revelled in gentle beauty, hesitant keys, and haunting swells of cello — lifting Cumming’s fragile voice. The tender simplicity left plenty of room for stillness, and the track held the listener strangely captive. Where some artists come flying out of the traps on a debut release, overeager to impress, Cumming rightly believed in the quiet effectiveness of her style.

RS Recommends: “Knocked for Six in BHX”

=====

➔ Jujulipps

There’s a reason that everyone from ASHY to JessB loves Jujulipps; a force of nature, a fearless hip hop artist who performs with a feverish flow. She made waves with the dynamic anthem “Hilary Banks”, proclaiming herself as the main character; “know you’re that bitch,” as she once told NZ On Air. Born in South Africa and having ancestral ties to Burundi and the Congo, Jujulipps’ hip sound contains traces of everything from Amapiano to Afrobeat. This child of the diaspora loves to celebrate global sounds in her music, and her songs are all the more vibrant for it.

RS Recommends; “Hilary Banks”

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→ **dœgægé**

With an artist name that seems wilfully elusive, there's actually nothing subtle about dœgægé's music. Caleb Doe's songs under the moniker have expressive titles like "A HEADACHE & A BLACK EYE" and "A DYING GNOME", and he performs like the 1975's Matty Healy doing his best pop-punk impression. Born in Aotearoa but now based in Melbourne, dœgægé (pronounced doh-gah-gay) creates music that is peculiar, precocious, but undeniably fun. It sounds like he's aiming for a genuinely new sound, and powered by youthful exuberance, he often succeeds in this mission.

RS Recommends:
"A HEADACHE & A BLACK EYE"

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THE SO-CALLED Southern Hospitality in Tennessee is no laughing matter.

Within the first five minutes of pulling up to my hotel in Nashville, I was welcomed to “music city” by a toothless smiling busker, handed a bandaid for my blister by a charming passerby, and called ‘mam’ more times than I could count.

While America’s southern state of Tennessee is so much more than its friendly people, the warm and welcoming attitude made visiting some of the world’s most historic and impressive music venues and exhibitions that much more exhilarating.

The only downfall? With so much music history and so many music-related stops on my packed itinerary, it was hard to find enough time to fit in a chinwag with every attentive local who was looking for one.

With that in mind, if you’re looking to explore some of the world’s most iconic music exhibits in Tennessee, you’re going to want to book a chunk of time – and make a serious schedule. These are some of the unmissable places in the state that are drenched with music history.

BY
**DANICA
BAKER**





BEALE STREET, MEMPHIS

From the red and white awnings to the neon signs, it's easy to feel like you've stepped back in time. And with live music on every corner, you're sure to find your groove.



Memphis

Graceland

Graceland is mind bogglingly massive – in both the figurative and literal sense. It's considered one of America's most popular tourist attractions, but you'll also rack up a huge step count while exploring all the Elvis memorabilia.

While the two private planes, plethora of cars, and hundreds of outfits on display are certainly impressive, it's the house tour that's hauntingly poignant. When you arrive, you're given an iPad as your tour guide, voiced by *Full House's* John Stamos, and are told anecdotes about each room as you explore The King of Rock 'n' Roll's former quarters. With so much of Elvis' life

on display, it comes as an expected comfort that the upstairs section of the house is off-limits to the public – the rockstar was transported to hospital by ambulance after he was found on the floor of his upstairs bathroom at the mansion at 3:30pm on August 16, 1977.

At the end of the house tour, you can visit Elvis' grave where he's laid to rest next to his grandmother Minnie Mae, his mother Gladys, his father Vernon and his daughter Lisa Marie. Visiting the burial site is an emotional experience, with thousands of letters and fresh flowers scattered over the tombstones.

Sun Studio

The world-famous Sun Studios sits on an unassuming corner on Union Ave in Memphis, across from a community college. If you weren't familiar with the iconic recording studio, it would be easy to pass it off as another hole-in-the-wall cafe or bar. That all changes upon entry.

It's the studio that launched the careers of Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, and of course, Elvis Presley. It's where Presley recorded his first demo – which led to him being discovered by the studio's owners.

Here, you can pose with Presley's microphone, explore his guitars, and listen to a recording of one of his impromptu jam sessions with Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, and Johnny Cash.

CRAIG THOMPSON

The Beauty Shop

While much of down-town Memphis has a laid-back, historic feel, some areas of the city have had a modern injection in recent times. One of these areas is Cooper Town, and here sits The Beauty Shop; the very salon where Priscilla Presley religiously went to get her beehive hair-do.

Memphis-native Karen Blockman Carrier is the brainchild behind the now-restaurant, which features booths complete with the actual hooded Belvedere hair dryers that Priscilla once used. The throwback menu includes local favourites like watermelon and wings, or pork and peach, alongside Fifties era cocktails like the Beautini and Pretty in Pink.

Beale Street

The red and white awnings, the retro Coke billboards, and the endless neon signs lining Beale Street can be disorienting. If only for a moment, it's easy to forget this is not the 1920s. That feeling amplifies when you enter one of the many live music venues on the strip. You'll be hard pressed to find a spot that *doesn't* have a live blues band belting out classics like "Son of a Preacher Man" or "Shake Rattle and Roll". But, perhaps the most endearing part of Beale Street is the crowd it draws. Each spot has its own regulars – like BB King's Blues Club – and among all of them you'll find a somewhat older couple, swirling around on the dance floor for date night.

Beale Street was officially declared the "Home of the Blues" by an act of Congress in 1977, and it's not hard to see why. The two block strip draws throngs of crowds who watch skilled street performers by day, and some of the most talented blues bands in the world by night.



STAX RECORDS Booker T. & The MG's were an American instrumental R&B/funk band that was influential in shaping the sound of Southern and Memphis soul. This vintage Stax Records memorabilia is a reminder of their lasting impact on American music.

Stax

Most people know the sign, and they probably know the groundbreaking acts like Otis Redding, Booker T. & The MGs, and Sam & Dave, who recorded at Stax Records. But a visit to the museum, which sits in the place where the studio once stood, is like attending a masterclass in southern soul history.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Stax was the place where many of the world's best blues, soul, and R&B artists would spend their days

smoking cigarettes and exchanging creative ideas, before recording songs that are still legendary to this day.

Inside the museum is Isaac Hayes' Superfly custom gold-plated 1972 Cadillac; gifted to him as part of his contract negotiations with Stax Records, as well as other monumental artefacts like Tina Turner's touring outfits, and the original two-track recorder Otis Redding used to make "Mr Pitiful" and "Respect".

BROADWAY, NASHVILLE

From sunrise to sunset, talented country bands perform in honky-tonks, and you may even see a country music star in the making.



Nashville

Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

It wouldn't be a trip to the music city without a stop in at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. The establishment has collected and preserved some of the most iconic music memorabilia of all time. Entrants can look inside Elvis Presley's Gold Plated 1960 custom Cadillac complete with a fidget, record player, and rather bulky TV, get up close and personal

with the Fender guitar Bob Dylan used on his album *Nashville Skyline*, and check out the fawn coat Taylor Swift wore on the cover of her album *Red*.

The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum also offers tours to the nearby RCA Studio B, where Elvis Presley, Dolly Parton, and The Everly Brothers have all recorded.

Broadway

Between Broadway's all-day live music venues and the cowboy-boot-clad tourists clutching White Claws and roaming the streets, it's easy to call the famous street a cliché. But, if you embrace Broadway for the trashy fun it is, you're guaranteed to have a good time.

From sunrise to well after sunset, the energetic street is lit up with honky-tonk after honky-tonk, featuring talented country bands ready to welcome you to the dance floor. You may even stumble across a country music star in waiting. Garth Brooks, George Strait, and Reba McEntire were all discovered while performing on the iconic strip.

When you're not tapping your feet or sipping on a Bushwacker (a frozen milk cocktail of Kahlua, rum, creme de cacao, and cream of coconut) the rooftop bars are a perfect place to catch the Nashville sun, or watch boozy bachelorette parties roll by in actual tractors.

Princes Hot Chicken

No doubt Nashville is known first and foremost as the capital of country music, but running a close second is its reputation as the home of hot chicken. The city is famous for its spicy poultry, and the locals will tell you the variation of spices mixed into the batter make it far superior to the usual hot sauce scenario common in other chicken hot-spots.

The story goes that Nashville's take on hot chicken originated back in the 1930s when a scorned Nashville woman suspected her husband Thornton Prince of having an affair, so she sprinkled an unhealthy dose of super spicy seasoning into her chicken batter. The plan backfired; he loved the dish. He went on to share the recipe with friends and family before opening Prince's Hot Chicken, which remains one of the city's most popular restaurants.

If you're looking to try chicken Nashville-style, it's hard to go past Prince's. The OG eatery is still in the family, run by the great-niece of Thornton Prince. If you like it hot, or have a death-by-chilli wish, try the 'XXX Hot' variation. You've been warned.

SUPPLIED



NMAAM, NASHVILLE

The museum is a tribute to the rich and diverse history of African American music.

National Museum of African American Music (NMAAM)

Nashville is so much more than country music. The National Museum of African American Music, located smack bang downtown in music city, claims to be the only museum of its kind dedicated to preserving and celebrating the history of Black music in America.

If you're the kind of museum-goer looking for an engaging, interactive experience, the National Museum of African American Music fits the brief. The seven section exhibition showcases everything from jazz to gospel to rap, in a hands-on way. You can create your own hip-hop beats and download them to a wristband, learn dance moves from across the decades, or digitally insert yourself into a gospel choir via green screen technology.

The Bluebird Cafe

For many, The Bluebird Cafe is where Taylor Swift was discovered, and made famous by the TV show *Nashville*, but in reality it's so much more. The almost-always-booked-out venue is a beloved music institution where songwriters go to share their crafts and be inspired by talented creatives.

It's not rare to see audience members – or other artists in the cosy twenty table cafe – break down in tears when a songwriter bares their soul in an intense and vulnerable performance. The walls are plastered with

posters of performers who have played there; the excited energy in the intimate room is palpable. People don't come to the Bluebird to catch up with their friends, they come with a passionate and unapologetic love of music.

Getting your hands on a ticket to The Bluebird Cafe is no easy feat. They're snapped up within minutes of going on sale, usually only a week ahead of the show date. If you can't get tickets to The Bluebird Cafe then The Listening Room is a great substitute with a similar concept. ®

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By Poppy Reid

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARCUS COOPER

TROYE SIVAN

“WE MET FOR A DRINK

in Melbourne but with the intention of hooking up, basically.”

Troye Sivan is seated at a table at Holloway House in West Hollywood. He’s sipping on sparkling mineral water and speaking with such addictive composure about a one-night-stand that I find myself leaning forward, right palm on chin, transfixed.

“He was super, super sweet and we had a great time,” Sivan continues. “And then we ended up going to my place and whatever...,” he smiles gently, in a way that’s neither shy nor brazen. “And afterwards, he said to me, ‘Can I sleep over? Is that alright?’ I hadn’t had a sleepover since my ex. And that felt really scary to me. Like very, very intimate.”

Sivan split from his ex Jacob Bixenman in 2019 after four years together. The confusion and grief of that time is tackled in six-song EP, *In A Dream*, which he self-admittedly “word-vomited” out and released in 2020. But laying there, next to this new paramour, Sivan began to reassess all he thought he knew about true intimacy.

“We were laying in bed and he was like, ‘This is one of life’s greatest pleasures, connecting with people in this way’. Obviously the hook up is fun, but he’s like, ‘Even if I never see you again, we get to have this really special moment together’.”

He never did see him again, but the experience shifted Sivan’s perspective on relationships. It was the flutter of a butterfly’s wing that ultimately unleashed a creative typhoon.

“That really kick-started everything.”

That encounter is all over the new record, his third and undoubtedly most anticipated opus, *Something to Give Each Other*. The title was inspired by it, so are the songs about his emotional reawakening (“Honey”), to his nights out on

Melbourne dancefloors (“Rush”), to the lyric: “*Boy can I be honest? / Kinda miss using my body*”, from the song “Got Me Started”. It’s even in a lyric in the outro of the extended version of “Rush”: “*To love with reciprocity is so good.*”

Tomorrow night Sivan will host an intimate launch party for “Rush” at a dive bar in Silverlake. He’ll play the song once, at midnight, and hide in the bathroom until it’s over. “I don’t like it when I’m at a party

IF THE COVER artwork didn’t allude to it – a beaming Troye Sivan between the legs of a naked man – his new album era is about liberation. It’s a natural progression from his 2018 album *Bloom*, where the Platinum-selling title track about bottoming, and the album itself, explored a delicate vulnerability. The 2023 era picks up where *Bloom* left off; it’s confident, hypersexualised, and destined for the canon of queer dancefloor anthems. In the same way

“I’ve always known that I could go back home to Australia and my family would be there. And that’s the best. It makes you invincible to a certain extent.”

and they play my music,” he says in his Australian-South-African accent that he’s maintained since relocating to LA in 2014. “It’s so embarrassing.”

“Rush”, named after the popular brand of poppers, became Sivan’s highest-charting solo single, accruing fifty million streams in two weeks. Sivan tells *Rolling Stone* he took a hit for the single’s cover photo to ensure it gave off the same flushed feeling amyl nitrite offers when it’s huffed on the dancefloor. Or in the bedroom, as is often the case.

“If you go back there’s this tiny vein on my head,” he smiles. “It’s my favourite part of the picture.”

Janet Jackson’s freshly-single-era was delivered with exotic warmth on *All For You*, Sivan’s new record sounds rich, and fast, and wandering in parts. And therein lies the paradox; it’s made for a certain fandom, but it’s not that. It slips in and out of queerness and traverses innovative pop territory; a soundtrack for every emotional experience.

Tracks like “Can’t Go Back Baby” and “One Of Your Girls” (about being a ‘straight’ man’s secret) feel high-brow, subtextual, and new territory for commercial pop. It sounds as if it’s from a remote homeplace you can’t quite recall – perhaps that’s due to all the travelling Sivan did while

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Photo Shoot

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TROYE SIVAN

creating the album. Written and recorded in London, LA, Melbourne and Sweden with longtime collaborators like Max Martin protégé Oscar Görres, Styalz Fuego, Ian Kirkpatrick, A.G. Cook, and Leland, the record sounds global and lavish – because it is.

Troye Sivan and Leland (who co-wrote some of Sivan's biggest hits including "My My My!" and "Youth") globe-trotted for almost a year together. They spent weeks in Stockholm, working at Max Martin's MXN studios with Oscar Görres. The pair would wake in time for breakfast and discuss what they felt like writing about as they ate, and then head to the studio to record it. Later, they would journey to Sydney and Melbourne – riding scooters through the city on the way to the studio – then off they flew to Paris, where they would take inspiration from the museums they would frequent, and later London, and finally LA, where they holed up in Leland's home studio.

Sivan filmed the "Rush" music video in Berlin. The titillating ode to the club community marks the boldest visual he's ever made – thanks to joyous choreography and a cast of Berlin club scene fixtures. Next up is the clip for "Got Me Started", which Sivan is filming in Bangkok. His dedication to a global-sounding record is all-encompassing; sonically, visually, energetically.

NOTICE THE NECKLACE he's wearing under his white mesh singlet and blue pinstripe shirt is the same one on the "Rush" single cover, and the one he wore while starring as Xander on the controversy-ridden TV show, *The Idol*. It's Cartier, he tells me, fingering the two interlocked rings hanging from its chain. "I got my friend

Kerri a ring and my friend Kayla a ring, then I wear theirs on my neck."

This article could easily be about 'Troye Sivan the wunderkind actor' not 'Troye Sivan the global pop star'. He's been pursuing an acting career since his early teens when his first manager discovered him on YouTube and put him forward for auditions. Like most of Troye Sivan's young endeavours, his first acting gig was a success. He starred as young Wolverine in the 2009 film *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*. He also starred in each of the *Spud* trilogy films alongside John Cleese. But it was his role in Joel Edgerton's *Boy Erased* in 2018, about the harmful effects of conversion therapy, that cemented Sivan as an actor's actor.

This year's *The Idol* was Sivan's first swing at television. The show's creators Sam Levinson and Abel Tesfaye (The Weeknd) were criticised for the brazen depictions of sex and violence, poor writing, and lack of character development. In a media landscape where a strong reaction to art is considered a home run, they would take the win. When I ask Sivan about further accusations of mistreatment towards the cast and crew, he speaks confidently.

"I definitely would like to think I'm a person with strong morals and if I had seen anything where I saw someone being uncomfortable, I would have been the first person to say, 'Hey, that's fucked, we have to stop. It's not okay what's happening'. And I didn't see it.

"I can't speak for Lily [Rose Depp] but I read interviews where she said she felt totally comfortable on set. So for me that is kind of where that conversation ends a little bit – unless there's some bigger picture thing I don't understand, because

I'm 'in it' or something. I don't know."

After spending the last two days observing Sivan, it's clear he has a level of insight which escapes most. I saw it in his joyous collaboration at the photoshoot, where our team suggested drawing a monobrow on him for one look and his response was, "Yes, slay". And how here at the restaurant he suggested we move tables to be further away from the speaker so the audio I was capturing would be easier to transcribe.

His sensitive spirit is all over his work. The record's title *Something to Give Each Other* is quite literally the wrapping with which he wants you to receive it: a gift to give someone else. So when he admits he felt unphased by *The Idol*'s controversy, it was surprising. Then I asked him where his resilience comes from.

"It's like nothing matters," he smiles. "Like literally nothing. As far as work and all that goes, I've always known that I could go back home to Australia and my family would be there. And that's the best. It makes you invincible to a certain extent."

IN THE BEGINNING, there was a twelve-year-old Troye Sivan and his computer camera in his bedroom in Perth. The same year, Apple released the iPhone, Barack Obama made history as the first Black US President, and California legalised gay marriage. At seventeen, Troye Sivan uploaded his coming out video, and by eighteen he had accrued a following of over four million people.

Soon he would become one of Australia's biggest music exports, with over ten billion streams and two (soon to be three) commercially successful albums to his name. He reached a summit of stardom rarely experienced by local acts. What most don't

TROYE SIVAN

know, is that he almost quit music entirely while making Platinum-selling debut album, *Blue Neighbourhood*.

"I was like, 'Damn, I wonder if the label made a mistake signing me'," he tells me the day before, perched on a couch in jeans and a singlet at the cover shoot studio. "[...] I was just like, 'I don't actually know if I'm cut out for this, or any good at this'."

He told no one. Not his parents, not his manager, not his label; no one.

following on YouTube as a child, not all of his subscribers had good intentions.

Content Warning: This next part of the article contains references the sensitive and distressing topic of online 'grooming'.

One older male fan pretended to be his manager for a time. Another fan, a man believed to be in his sixties, would send Sivan gifts almost every day to a designated PO Box. Often it would be a t-shirt or a CD, or a piece of art, but other times

"I was like, 'Damn, I wonder if the label made a mistake signing me'."

"I just didn't want to let anyone down or like, you know, have built their hopes up because I had this YouTube audience."

In Sivan's formative career years, YouTube was moving the needle in ways that eclipsed physical sales and digital downloads. Justin Bieber was riding the success of his debut EP after being discovered by Usher and Scooter Braun on YouTube, and A&Rs on this side of the pacific were discovering the platform's power. EMI Australia's Mark Holland flew to Perth and signed Troye Sivan for the world a decade ago and, despite global distribution agreements, the local label is still considered the control centre of the Troye Sivan Machine.

ACROSS THE TWO days we spent together, there was only one moment when Sivan closed up. "I don't want to talk about it too much," he says. When Sivan was building his

it would be long letters. Sivan was twelve and he kept it from his parents.

"He used to get angry at me if I didn't respond in a timely manner to say thank you," says Sivan. "And I had no idea. I would be like, 'Oh my God, thank you so much'. Like engaging with him and stuff like that. That's one of the more benign ones."

I ask him about the less benign ones.

"I just had like bad people, you know, around when I was a kid."

Stalking?

"Yeah, sometimes."

Physically?

"Sometimes."

"I feel like it's a pretty common experience to have creepy adults online talking to children, you know. I think that's a really common thing."

And even fame doesn't insulate you from the dangers that many young people face online today; in some cases, it heightens the risk of it occurring. An

article by *Rolling Stone's* EJ Dickson noted 'grooming' behaviours are "both common and insidious".

"Which is by design," she wrote. "An adept abuser is skilled at gradually inuring their victim to increasingly inappropriate behaviour, so oftentimes they're not even aware of what's happening to them while it's going on."

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Troye Sivan was based in Melbourne and living with his younger siblings – his sister Sage and his brother Tyde. All three work in music; Sage is a member of indie-pop band Approachable Members of Your Local Community and Tyde is a songwriter and artist in his own right. All three were single at the time.

"The house was just this, like, revolving door," Sivan smiles knowingly. "And my parents were like, obsessed," he jokes. "They're cool, they're chill."

Sivan is candid about his active sex life. He posted a photograph of his daily vitamins in March, with the caption "this combo keeps me gay". One pill was PrEP, the revolutionary medication that prevents the transfer of HIV. But he wasn't always moving around with such comfort in singledom. It took time for him to realise how much he loves his own company. In the past Sivan would often wake up stressed and would ride the waves of emotions which follow a breakup. Now, he's learned he enjoys travelling solo and taking himself out to dinner.

"When you first go through the breakup, it feels unfair or shocking that you don't have..." he pauses, "when you realise you're alone in the world. It's just you. And once you get over that shock – that that person doesn't owe you anything."

JACKET AND SWEATER: MARNI, SHORTS: SYTLIST'S OWN







TROYE SIVAN

They don't owe you to be with you or to look after you – you realise that you've got to do it yourself. It's hard, but then as soon as you accept that, it's amazing.

“[...] I think out of necessity you surprise yourself. You meet yourself in that moment because damn, I didn't know that I had it in me to go to a party by myself. Or you know, go on a blind date that you've been set up with.”

AT THE PHOTOSHOOT, Sivan was wrestling with a sinus infection. “I'm going to blow my nose now otherwise it'll annoy me the whole time,” he says, holding his nose and excusing himself.

When he returns from the bathroom, we talk about his use of male pronouns in his lyrics, starting with 2014's “Gasoline”. I tell him he helped lead the charge for queer representation in music. Sivan, always the cognisant observer, says he “had it easy in the context of the queer experience”.

Aware of the privilege he's been afforded simply by when, and where, he was born, Sivan is well known for lending his celebrity to queer causes and charitable elements. His real influence as an activist, however, is less obtrusive. He moves in commercial spaces, on your radio, on billboards, and across your social media timelines – casually inserting queer themes into the public consciousness. A young, white, charming gay man living his best life; singing about boyfriends, anal sex, and party drugs. It doesn't so much disrupt, as it does subvert. A private protest on a public stage.

“There's this Jewish idea that the best kind of Tzedakah, which is charity, is

Tzedakah that you do quietly. And it's private,” he says.

WHEN SIVAN WAS writing his debut album with songwriter/producer and artist Leland, the now longtime collaborator was terrified.

“I come from a really conservative background and a super conservative upbringing. That was such a chapter of growth for me to not give a fuck,” Leland says from

TROYE SIVAN'S TICKET to the music industry's inner sanctum is his uniqueness. He takes an inspired approach to music, yet he has no desire to emulate any of pop's luminaries. He's carving his own path based on his individual experience of unabashed experimentation. In some ways – when considering his contribution to LGBTQI+ equality – Sivan's career could have become an avatar of queer iconography. But it's not.

“I think queer generations after us are going to look back and just see how important Troye's music is and was.” - LELAND

Sound City Studios in LA. “To write exactly what the song calls for and not be fearful of what some conservative person is going to think of this or me.”

Now, thanks to artists like Sivan, Lil Nas X, Sam Smith and Kim Petras, queer representation in music is celebrated in a way that would make forbearers like George Michael, Freddie Mercury and Elton John proud. “I think queer generations after us are going to look back and just see how important Troye's music is and was,” says Leland. “And how joyful it is and was. And necessary.”

“But for me, it's helped me just give less fucks and to be less fearful in how I move throughout this industry and how I move throughout my career.”

Instead, Sivan is one of one, a young renaissance man whose experiences and resulting music will have a lasting impact on not just pop music, but an entire community who, with each overt celebration of queer culture, is given further permission to live an authentic life.

“I think about a young kid in Australia or in the middle of America. Or whatever. Wherever,” he says, unknowingly playing with his hands and pushing back his fingers. “I think about if they see the music videos or hear the music, or hear the stories... If I can make them feel affirmed and seen and recognised – or inspired maybe to go live this happy, free, queer life – then that is something that I'm really proud of. That's something I would really love.” ®



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WOYA



VOGUE

Eurovision's Aussie Battler

WORDS BY
**CONOR
LOCHRIE**

FROM LEFT drummer Ash Doodkorte, guitarist Scott Kay, lead singer Danny Estrin, guitarist Simone Dow, and bassist Alex Canion.

“I’M JUST TRYING to have a nice lunch in the city by myself without being mobbed for selfies. I was two bites into my burrito and someone was like, ‘Oh, my god, I need a selfie’. This is a new level. Let’s roll with it!”

For Voyager, life has changed irrevocably. The band has just returned home from representing Australia at Eurovision, where they finished in a highly respectable ninth place. No one, certainly not the five hard-working musicians that make up the band, saw this coming.

Danny Estrin formed Voyager at the University of Western Australia in 1999, almost twenty-five years before he’d be swamped by fans while trying to enjoy a meal in public.

The progressive metal band spent the next few decades plugging away on the Australian live music circuit, paying their dues, and going through several lineup changes before eventually settling as the five-piece that took Eurovision by storm: Danny leading from the front, supported by guitarists Simone Dow and Scott Kay, bassist Alex Canion, and drummer Ash Doodkorte.

Previous Australian entrants had already been well-known before participating in Eurovision – particularly Guy Sebastian and Jessica Mauboy – but Voyager was a relative nonentity. After losing out to Sheldon Riley in the SBS competition *Eurovision: Australia Decides* in 2022 (despite winning the public vote), they were selected by the broadcaster to enter Eurovision this year, becoming the first-ever band to represent the country in the contest. The long journey to the top made the moment all the sweeter for the five members. “It felt like a really good pay-off for twenty-five years or so of plugging away as a drummer in rock and metal bands,” Ash says. “This is the kind of stage I’d been asking for.” For Danny, there from the very beginning, it was the ultimate payoff. “Someone described it as the ‘twenty-year overnight success story,’” he laughs.

In early May, Voyager finally headed to the contest they’d dreamed of taking part in ever since Australia made its debut in 2015. Their

“

One day you’re playing an original song to 162 million people, the next someone is harassing you to play ‘Wonderwall’ at a pub.

Alex Canion, *Bassist*

destination was Liverpool and not Ukraine, who were unable to host due to the Russian conflict.

Entering the stage in a car, they motored their way through round two to earn their place in the grand final.

“We’ve all been touring and playing shows for so long, the stage is the most comfortable spot for us,” Scott explains. “We can definitely handle the thing we really need to do, which is rock out,” Ash adds with confidence.

The reward for their towering performance was an eventual Top Ten finish. “We just wanted to qualify for the grand final and everything else from there was just gravy for us,” Scott says. “What really surprised us this year was that the

jury vote for us was so high. We smashed it, I was honestly expecting zero from the jury,” Danny claims.

The irony that the jury supported Voyager wasn’t lost on Alex. “It felt like karmic justice to do so well with the jury in the grand final, as it was the lower jury vote that meant we didn’t win *Eurovision: Australia Decides* last year.”

“*Have you ever done anything like this before?*” is Danny’s belted refrain throughout their Eurovision song, “Promise”. “*If you haven’t done anything like this before, then you haven’t been alive,*” he sings. When performing that last line at the grand final, he added a knowing glance to the camera; “If you haven’t done Eurovision, you haven’t really lived,” he seemed to be saying.

Why did “Promise” connect so well with fans? “I don’t think this is a year for negativity or introspection,” Scott says of their positive anthem. “I think it’s time we get back to just enjoying life a bit more.” Simone wholeheartedly agrees. “I think people just want to celebrate and come together and have a good time. When you have a song that’s a bit more uplifting, you really feel it in your bones.”

Back home, Voyager was backed by legions of well-wishers. “I think what sticks out to me the most is just the overwhelming support we received from our fans and everyone back home in Australia,” Alex says. “We were constantly told that we deserved the opportunity and that we’ve made people proud to be Australian. That to me is wild. Not every act at Eurovision had the support that we did and it made the whole experience much easier to embrace.” And as Ash notes, this country really does love Eurovision. “We actually have the most dedicated [Eurovision] fans because they get up at like 3am to watch it!”

Voyager wasn’t just representing their country – they were ambassadors for an entire movement of music. They were one of the first bands to take metal to the dance-pop Eurovision machine, and they feel that they brought a much-needed injection of heaviness to the competition. “I think audiences enjoy having that diversity,” Scott insists. “After about twenty ballads, you get a bit tired,” Ash scoffs.

But metal is often an insular world, treated as sacred by its passionate fans. A metal band performing at the campest singing competition in the world? That’s a scenario ripe for mockery. After some initial gripings from naysayers, though, all five were overwhelmed at the support they received from the community. “I can’t think of any negative feedback on the whole thing,” Ash says. “We had some real love from the metal community. This is a great platform for heavy music. The love was universal,” Danny adds. “We got so many messages of support from the metal scene, which was kind of surprising,” Simone reveals.

And really, there’s often an inherent campiness to metal. “What’s more theatrical and

“

**I don't think
this is a year for
negativity or
introspection.**

Simone Dow, *Guitarist*

awesome than metal?!” Ash exclaims. “It’s dramatic, and it needs a big stage to amplify the ferocity of the whole thing.” “Metal has always been theatrical,” Scott agrees. “It doesn’t get more ridiculous than five dudes with big mullets, screaming at the top of their lungs. You take the music seriously, but not yourself.”

Before Eurovision, Voyager had released seven studio albums, which is a lot of material for new-found fans to devour. “I think we’re in a position to capitalise because we’ve got a back catalogue, we’ve got a legacy as a band. And in my humble opinion, the legacy is quite strong. We’ve earned a lot of diehard fans over the years,” says Scott. Ash agrees. “I was thinking how hard it would be if this was the start of your music career – you’d have so much work to do, just to follow up, but we’ve already got that catalogue.”

Danny adds that the band’s new fans are “almost apologetic” when they discover just how long they’ve been working towards this moment. There’s also a new album on the way that Alex thinks might be their “darkest and heaviest yet”. For the first time, the band recorded live in the room together. “I think it makes for an especially cohesive and organic record,” he adds.

As well as their new album, they also have a homecoming tour of Australia, before the band heads back to Europe. Ash can’t wait to perform in Germany (“We have that increased exposure there now”), but it’s two other countries he really feels deserves a Voyager visit. “I think we really need to get to Iceland and Portugal to say thanks for twelve points!” Danny, meanwhile, has his sights set even further afield. “Hopefully we’ll do North America next year, and then I’d love to go deeper into Latin America. I’m excited about exploring new territories, that’s a wonderful thing.”

Life has changed forever for Voyager, but they’re never going to forget the hard road to this point. “I got home and then two days later, I played a cover gig at a pub to about thirty people,” Alex says. “One day you’re playing an original song to 162 million people, the next someone is harassing you to play ‘Wonderwall’ at a pub. I love the dichotomy of it all.” ®





ARTISTS OF AOTEAROA:
A PHOTO ESSAY BY CHRIS CUFFARO



▼ **FAT FREDDY'S DROP**

Iconic Wellington collective, Fat Freddy's Drop. A group whose sound has become integral to the Aotearoa reggae and dub tapestry, Fat Freddy's Drop are one of the nation's most successful exports.

Throughout his distinguished career, photographer **Chris Cuffaro** has photographed some of the biggest names in music, from Nirvana to Iggy Pop, Elvis Costello to Nick Cave. Now, he can add a few future Kiwi legends to the mix thanks to a new photo series celebrating artists of Aotearoa.

Cuffaro partnered with Agentx/Publicity+ Presents to capture acts like Tiki Taane, Don McGlashan, Reb Fountain, Theia, JessB, and Tami Neilson in Auckland to raise funds for MusicHelps, which develops projects in the community that use music to support the most vulnerable.

Chris Cuffaro’s photographs were exhibited at Art News Aotearoa in Auckland in July and auctioned through Webb’s with all proceeds going to MusicHelps.



▲ **PROTEINS OF MAGIC**
Alternative indie performer and multi-disciplinary artist Kelly Sherrod, aka Proteins of Magic. Based between Auckland and Nashville, Proteins of Magic has been captivating with her unique alchemy of sound and vision.

▼ **HOLLIE SMITH**
Award winning soul singer-songwriter, Hollie Smith. With four solo RIANZ Number One albums to her name, Smith is one of Aotearoa’s most successful female performers.





◀ **BOH RUNGA**

Christchurch-born, Ngāti Kahungunu songwriter and performer, Boh Runga. Beloved for her work with award-winning Auckland group Stellar, Boh's solo career bolstered her legacy.



◀ **TAMI NEILSON**

Country and soul musician and songwriter, Tami Neilson. A multiple award winning songwriter, the Canadian-born Neilson has long been heralded as one of Aotearoa's most captivating voices.



◀ **MUROKI**

Raglan-raised, Kenyan-New Zealand reggae artist, Muroki. Debuting as a solo artist in 2019, Muroki was quick to court the attention of industry and fans after landing on the radar of BENEE, and then releasing his now Platinum-selling single, "Wavy".



◀ **TROY KINGI**

Multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and actor, Troy Kingi. One of the nation's most talented artists, Kingi's "10/10/10" project is seeing the artist release ten albums, in ten genres, across ten years.

▼ **JESSB**

Auckland hip hop artist and former professional netballer, JessB. First breaking out in 2017, Jess has become one of NZ's most exciting names in rap thanks to her inimitable flow and refusal to be tamed on a record.



◀ **DON McGLASHAN**

Musician, composer, songwriter and actor, Don McGlashan. An acclaimed composer for television and film, McGlashan's legacy began forming long prior, courtesy of his work with groups including Blam Blam Blam, The Mutton Birds and The Front Lawn.



◀ **JON TOOGOOD**

Wellington rock icon Jon Toogood. As frontman for the beloved group Shihad, Toogood's voice and presence has made him a national treasure.

► **TIKI TAANE**

Multi-instrumentalist and activist, Tiki Taane. One of Aotearoa's most impassioned voices, the former Salmonella Dub member and Platinum-selling solo artist continues to captivate with his fusion of inspired music and messaging.





▲ **BEN HORLOCK**
Dunedin pop artist, Ben Horlock. The nineteen year old has been capturing the attention of many, thanks to his wisened sense of songwriting, prodigious guitar skills and natural charisma.

► **TALI**
Taranaki-born drum n bass MC, Natalia Sheppard aka Tali. Internationally renowned, Tali's music captured the spirit of NZ's drum n bass underground and took it to the world.



► **MURRAY CAMMICK**
Music journalist, record label founder and photographer, Murray Cammick. An NZ music industry legend since the Seventies, Cammick founded seminal publication, *Rip It Up*; as well as Southside and Wildside Records.





◀ **THEIA**

Christchurch singer and songwriter, THEIA. Of Ngāti Tipā and Waikato-Tainui descent, THEIA's fusion of alt-pop music and a fiercely confident grasp on her artistic vision has brought her international attention.

▼ **JULIA DEANS**

Christchurch singer, guitarist and songwriter, Julia Deans. Known for her work with Banshee Reel, Fur Patrol, The Adults and then, as a soloist, Deans is a beloved and respected presence in NZ rock history.



▲ **REB FOUNTAIN BAND**

San Francisco born, Lyttleton raised alternative artist, Reb Fountain. With her band, Dave Khan, Sam Peebles, Cole Goodley and Brendon Turner, Reb Fountain harnesses the type of live show that has drawn comparisons to Nick Cave and Cat Power.



LISA JOHNSON

The First Female Road Warrior

The work of a roadie is never done and rarely seen. Without their efforts, there's no show. Recount the name of one roadie, just one, and you're ahead of the game. And if you're going to stop at one, make sure the name is Tana Douglas.

BY LARS BRANDLE

BORN IN AUSTRALIA, Tana Douglas is a trailblazer. The first female roadie, a leader in a man's world. A rock star among roadies having toured the globe with the likes of AC/DC, Iggy Pop, The Who, The Police and many more.

Rolling Stone caught up with Douglas for a Zoom chat from her home in the United States.

Fittingly, in some parts of her adopted homeland, Douglas rhymes with badass. "You've got to pick your battles. And still females in the industry today are picking their battles. It's not just across the music business, it's most careers," she explains. "Still, we haven't come as far as we think we have, and I think that's unfortunate."

Those battles were always hard fought. From a young age, Douglas set out to assemble an armoury that covered it all, front of house, lights, sound, action. She coupled her swag of skills with a thick skin and shotgun for a mouth.

"I developed a rather wry wit and a rather caustic tongue. I could pretty much cut them down to size with a one liner, and then smile and walk away, and everyone would laugh at them. It was a free-for-all back in the early days. Everyone was fighting to be there. But as a

female, you really had to nip it in the bud. You couldn't let it start."

It also helps that she towers over many of the artists and crew she's worked with. Standing just shy of six-feet tall, Douglas is "statuesque, she's imposing and she's strong," recounts C, another experienced female roadie who admits to being in awe of her achievements. "Many, many times, I was the only woman for quite some time working on a gig," handling general crew work, mainly lighting, rigging, setting up concerts, "but I'm not highly accomplished the way Tana is. There'd be no mistaking Tana."

Like Douglas, C, who chooses to keep her name a secret for this *Rolling Stone* tale for reasons she declined to elaborate on, also worked and lived on three continents.

Putting the shoulder in with the boys, "sometimes I got very exhausted psychologically, trying to protect myself in a way. And I wanted to focus my energy more on doing the work I had to do rather than warding off behaviours," says C. Some were either patronising, "Here honey, let me lift that for you."

Other situations felt like colleagues were putting her through her paces. "[They were] giving me jobs that were either slightly demeaning jobs they didn't want to do or giving me jobs to test

me out, and maybe even see if I failed. And I got exhausted by dealing with that."

The nonsense ended when C cut her hair "super, super, super short."

"It didn't suit me in the least. And oddly enough, I felt that some of the guys accepted me more." She also took the time to get to know the other halves. "If any other wives and girlfriends were at gigs, I'd befriend them. I just wanted to set aside any possible feelings of animosity. And also, I longed for some female company, sometimes, after working with all these guys."

Douglas got a taste for rock 'n' roll early on. As a teenager, a "fifteen year old runaway from Brisbane," is how she remembers it, she fled for Nimbin, a free-spirited hippie town in northern New South Wales, where the Aquarius Festival of the early Seventies famously opened minds, and planted the seed for a journey.

From there, inspiration and opportunities came from the most unlikely of sources – Philippe Petit, a French tightrope walker with a reputation for hair-raising stunts, came into her world.

Douglas would walk that fine line too, and it'd take her to the biggest stages, the mightiest tours of them all, and live on both sides of the Atlantic.



DOUGLAS' RESUME IS A WHO'S WHO OF ROCK ROYALTY: The Who, AC/DC, Manfred Becker, and Ozzy Osbourne (clockwise from top left).

"The bottom line was, I was looking for a family unit. I was looking for somewhere where I could belong. And of all the places on the planet, you know, as they say, of all the joints and all the birds in the world, you walked into this one? Well, that's what happened. I just wandered onto a stage one day and, it seemed to fit, and I found those sort of big brother types that would look after me. There were the smart alec ones that wanted nothing to do with me. But it was just like a big dysfunctional family, you know, and I never had a family. So I didn't know how dysfunctional it was, I thought it was normal."

All journeys have markers. Douglas' was on August 18, 1979, when The Who played London's Wembley Stadium. "I finally relaxed enough to know that I belonged." Douglas had been asked to do the date, which turned into a tour. "You look at eighty-thousand people, and then just for a quick, brief moment, it was like, well, they've made it. I'm working for them, I've made it as well. It was kind of like a little piggy-back moment. My attitude changed

after that job, or my perception changed after that, where I was more comfortable in my skin. And it didn't hurt that AC/DC was on the bill as well."

The Young brothers and AC/DC are more progressive than people give them credit for. The band's career was, for many years, guided by Alberts CEO Fifi Riccobono, herself a trailblazer.

Back in the early Seventies, at a time when "a woman's place was definitely not on the road, especially with a rock band," Riccobono recounts to *Rolling Stone*, Douglas "managed to elbow her way into the 'roadie' slot" with the future Hall of Famers. She was sixteen, "a quick learner and gained the band's respect and soon became the 'go to' person on the road."

Douglas has her own theory. "I think that's a family thing, that was ingrained with them," she says of AC/DC. "They had strong women [around them], their mum was really strong, their sister was really strong. And so I think they accepted that and they look to it, you know, for guidance

"YOU WILL NEVER EVER BE AS COOL AS TANA DOUGLAS."

or comfort." Having women in their inner circle was "really important for them," she continues, "and I firmly believe that that's probably the reason why I was offered the job."

The job offers kept coming. Douglas worked with Ozzy Osbourne on his Blizard of Ozz tour, she worked the Whitesnake tour in 1979 while pregnant ("nobody had noticed," she explains in her autobiography), toured the world with Status Quo and wound up working with TASCOS, one of the world's biggest sound production companies. The globe and its stars of

rock music opened up.

With the benefit of hindsight, Douglas can identify the winning personality traits for a roadie. "Have a good rapport with people. It's such an insulated existence. You have to have a personality where you have to be strong enough to survive, but you also have to be malleable enough to live in a little tin can flying down the freeway at one-hundred kilometres an hour,



TANA DOUGLAS AT ROCKPALAST: With multiple headliner bands on the same bill, Tana would need to refocus the lighting rig between bands for WDR German TV (MANFRED BECKER).

with twelve total strangers for the next eighteen months of your life. That doesn't even count the bed (or lack thereof), or the local crews or the promoters or any of these hundreds of people who you're probably never ever going to meet again."

There was a time before professional roadies existed, as Stuart Coupe points out in his 2018 book, aptly titled *Roadies*. Back in the day, the artists or their closest would simply lug their own gear, a game that limits the stage and performance to something you'd see on Saturday night down your local.

Coupe's tome opens with a study of Douglas and her achievements. "Tana Douglas was a game changer. A pioneering woman – and a take-no-prisoners one – in the ultra male world of road crew," he tells *Rolling Stone*. Coupe remembers his own "jaw dropping" when he asked Douglas her age when she was mixing AC/DC. "I was almost eighteen," was her response.

Douglas was a fine sound person, something she'd learnt from her work without any formal training, notes Coupe in *Roadies*, published by Hachette Australia.

"You will never ever be as cool as Tana Douglas," he says. "And that was just the beginning of an extraordinary career. She is totally the real deal."

Despite the many good times, she doesn't attach herself to the memorabilia that collects over time.

Douglas recycles her gear. It's a pattern, she says, recounting how she'd gather her goodies and head to Venice Beach, California where she would kit out the needy. Imagine, homeless people wandering around in Douglas' preloved Pink Floyd and Elton John tour jackets, and you've got the glorious picture.

Giving help is in her nature. Today, Douglas lends her time and energies to those organisations and companies which are "very female supportive", through mentoring and guest speaking roles. Douglas is clearly a one-off, though women remain a rarity in the twilight world of roadies.

IMAGINE, HOMELESS PEOPLE WANDERING AROUND IN DOUGLAS' PRELOVED PINK FLOYD AND ELTON JOHN TOUR JACKETS, AND YOU'VE GOT THE GLORIOUS PICTURE.

A recently-published report into a parallel area of the music industry, the recording studio, found that men outnumber women and non-binary people by a ratio of nineteen to one on major commercial projects. The findings were captured in the 101-page *Fix the Mix* report, an initiative of US-based We Are Moving the Needle and Jaxsta, the Australia-based official music credits database.

"There's women in the real world. Can we grow up and get on with it," she explains. "We're all alpha personalities, which is what makes us clash more.

If we work together it's so much easier." Sound-girls (US), Women in Live Music (UK and Europe) and Australia's CrewCare and SupportAct are among those organisations making a real difference, she says.



TANA AT ROCKPALAST (MANFRED BECKER)

No story on the touring landscape can be told without a dabble with the dark side. Does the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll stereotype still apply? Well, yes. "They're just better at lying. Seriously, there's so much money involved. They can't admit to it," she says of rock music's long and storied alliance with substances. "People are still OD'ing, they're just denying that they're doing the drugs. To be fair, the drugs now are way more dangerous. I mean, I wouldn't even consider doing any of the stuff that's out there." Having cast her mind back, "When I was in my twenties, did I ask what was in it? No," she says with a laugh. "I don't know the logic behind the whole drug industry at this point. It just seems to be to kill people. It used to be to have a good time."

Change is slow, and Douglas has a front-row seat for some of the backwards legislation rolling out in some counties and states of the US.

"I did actually say to anyone in earshot that if Trump got in again (elected president in the 2024 federal election) I would

leave. That's it. If Trump's in, I'm gone."

And with that, Douglas considers the future. She still loves live music, and art; she studies art theory and fine arts at school. "They both tie in together," she notes. She's been pitched the idea of turning her life story into a screenplay. Those war stories, and there are many, aren't for retelling. "Gossip on the bands? That's not what I'm about. That's not what the job is. It's just as important that people find out what it is that we really do."

Douglas, who chronicled her life on the road in the 2021 autobiography *Loud*, is happily "semi-retired," but another tour might work, in the right scenario. "I don't want to go out there and be the grumpy old person on the tour. Am I gonna go out and unload trucks? Hell no. Give that to some kid in his twenties or

"GOSSIP ON THE BANDS? THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M ABOUT. THAT'S NOT WHAT THE JOB IS. IT'S JUST AS IMPORTANT THAT PEOPLE FIND OUT WHAT IT IS THAT WE REALLY DO."

thirties. There's no need for me to be doing that. That's just lunacy."

Her body has, admittedly, held up well, her ears are in good nick (she thanks a career of wearing headsets), though her knees have taken some punishment. There's a warning to all young roadies – don't jump off the front of the stage. "I'm a pretty tough broad," she admits. "Nothing's brought me down yet."

What next? Australia, perhaps. "Recently, I've been thinking, where do I

want to go? A beach in Thailand sounds fabulous. But is that so practical? I don't know. So why don't I have the beach in Australia? For God's sake, there's plenty of them. I can actually see it happening. It's probably the first time I've said it out loud." ®



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there's something about **Abbie Chatfield**

WORDS BY **Vivienne Kelly**

Is this the end for Abbie Chatfield? That's not a tabloid headline. It's a question that crosses my mind as she sits across from me at a cafe in Sydney's Pyrmont.

My worry is genuine, at least more so than the faux concern shown by the gossip rags speculating that her projects and public persona are about to implode. "Something's gotta give." "Are cracks starting to show?" "Is this the unravelling of Abbie Chatfield?"

No, in this instance I'm worried it's the end because she's choking on her steak.

The last question I asked her was about the incessant feedback loop of social media. Imagine dying talking about social media feedback. She recovers (spoiler alert), and I think, 'Fuck. It must be exhausting being Abbie Chatfield'.

Even a casual observer could look at her resumé or social media content and think, "It's a lot" (which is also, as it turns out, the

name of the podcast she launched in March 2020). At the time of writing, Chatfield hosts the new Binge dating format *F BOY Island*, is a panellist on Channel 10's *The Masked Singer*, fronts the national nights radio program across SCA's Hit Network, and has a beer brand, a clothing line (more on that later), and a best selling vibrator.

She's constant tabloid fodder, and rumours abound in certain media circles that she's difficult to work with. Demanding. Needy. Egotistical. Chaotic. Unpredictable.

Both interviewer and interviewee, however, are acutely aware that there are men in the industry who are difficult to work with. Demanding. Needy. Chaotic. Unpredictable. And, paid more.

"I mean, yeah," she pauses, noticeably silent, when I ask her about these rumours, particularly the alleged never-ending "chaos" behind-the-scenes at her radio show.





I'm slightly concerned she might be choking on her steak once more, but it soon becomes clear that she's more likely choking on her own tongue. For the first time in the interview, she is visibly holding back her thoughts.

"I think if people knew what actually happened, they wouldn't think that. [...] It's frustrating, especially because it's the easiest thing to say that a woman in media is hard to work with, without also thinking about other contributing factors. I think it's funny that everyone's 'go-to' is that I'm the issue. I mean, I can't give away too much, but yeah."

She stops, and makes a face that says a lot more than her words did.

Does the face mean she thinks she is held to too high of a standard and judged too harshly?

"I don't think it's too high of a standard, but I think it's higher than other people," she says, noting that *F BOY Island*, for example, is *meant* to be a silly, unsubtle show. She thinks the negative feedback around its announcement was premature and presumptive. "I never said that I was doing a Louis Theroux documentary," she says.

Despite her initial hesitation, she's now recovered and is willing to say more.

"It's a very easy narrative to say a woman's hard to work with in media. Men get way more allowances. Men are allowed to have an aggressive outburst on-air. There are some people in media who are truly awful – both at work and away from work. It's known in the industry, but no one says anything. But a woman doesn't smile enough, and then they're a bitch and they're hard to work with," she says.

It's a difficult balancing act though for someone who lives so much of their life online and in the public eye. A lot of Abbie's 'personal brand' hinges on her calling people in, calling people out, calling for change, calling for more accountability. She does it visibly and vocally. As such, there's an underlying expectation that she should be more than prepared to be called out herself, whether it be for her behaviour or her business decisions.

So when her clothing line, Verbose, was seemingly not fulfilling some orders or replying to questions on Instagram about the viability of the brand, people were quick to label the radio silence as inconsistent and disingenuous.

While the Verbose Instagram page remained silent, Abbie was making a lot of noise about *F BOY Island* on her personal channel. About social issues. About other money-making ventures. About anything and everything. Just not Verbose. For her part though, Abbie is frustrated that people automatically assume malicious

intent, conspiracy or deliberate wrongdoing. There is, she insists, nothing to see here.

"I'm having a big break because I'm so busy. [Product] releases drop. The drop is bought. There's nothing dramatic, it's just that I haven't even had time to call my Mum, let alone run a label," she says, playing down any drumbeat of drama.

"I've just been too busy to do a clothing brand properly right now, so I'm pausing it until my brain is not so [preoccupied]. I need a break," she adds.

"It's just majorly paused because I can't add another thing to my plate right now."

She also notes she's stuck between a bit of a rock and a hard place in attempting to avoid burnout while also keeping everyone happy.



I never said that I was doing a Louis Theroux documentary.

And this is where the truth and complexity of Abbie's situation becomes clear. Some people feel like she's too much, but actually, it's never enough.

"People tell me, 'Take time off', and then I pause something and it's like I've killed someone's first born. I haven't even said 'No' [to the label continuing], I've just gone, 'I can't do it right now'."

There is, it would appear, a very real and tangible fear living inside her that this could all disappear.

"I think it's frustrating when people say, 'Have some time off', and I have people DM me with the best of intentions saying, 'What I've realised is you're always replaceable at work, but you aren't replaceable to your friends and family'. And I'm like, 'Totally, except you've just pointed out everyone's greatest fear in this industry. So thanks for reminding me that I'm

replaceable and that I cannot stop working',” she says.

Even at lunch with *Rolling Stone*, she is a bit anxious that she's not doing enough. Not lining up her next project. Not making something. Filming something. Fronting something. Sharing something of herself publicly.

At her recent Trauma Dump stage show, which toured across the country, she publicly shared a lot of herself, and revealed some incredibly dark and terrifying things which have happened to her. Actions, perpetrated by men, which would, if nothing else, give rise to someone being demanding. Needy. Egotistical. Chaotic. Unpredictable.

And yet she did it in such a way that made the Abbie Chatfield on stage seem much more real, and raw, than the Abbie Chatfield you might read about online.

She told a story which started out funny and relatable – about a seemingly mediocre but mild man – which quickly turned to terrifying violence, control and abuse. The abuse unfolded while she was already in the public eye, with paparazzi and the public watching her every move, but nobody knew – until now.


The girls, the gays, and the theys in the audience were visibly traumatised and weirdly comforted that “something like this” could happen to “someone like her”.

Sharing this much of yourself though, must leave little in the tank. What, if anything, does she keep for herself?

She says she now avoids talking about situations when they've just happened, when they're heightened and in the moment. Basically, she's trying to cut back on just blurting things out. She does, however, warn potential partners that they might be discussed on her podcast. If they're not okay with that, she won't sleep with them, because she can't guarantee silence.

"I actually can't change my behaviour. [...] My job is to be open about my personal life. If I was to stop doing that, I wouldn't be doing my job."

She adds: "Everything is a reflection of my personality, when I'm posting online, or doing my radio show, or my podcast, I need things to be how I want them to be, and that's why I am where I am, because I have learned to speak up for myself if something isn't correct – because if it isn't correct I'm the one that gets backlash and I'm the one that isn't proud of my work. And I also don't want to waste anyone's time. [...] When everyone's making money off of you, you have to be a strong woman in media, otherwise you wouldn't have a career."

She finishes the meal, and it seems that no sneaky steak, malicious man, gossip guru, or reductive rumour is going to spell the end for Abbie Chatfield. 



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National Affairs

VOICE, TREATY, TRUTH:

The young people for a new Australia

*How the Uluru Youth Network are lending
their voices to 'The Voice to Parliament'*

WORDS BY
SOSEFINA FUAMOLI

There currently exists a potency within the Australian political and social climate that has made issues affecting our day-to-day lives impossible to ignore.

The combination of living in an increasingly digital and, as such, empowered age, has meant our leaders in positions of power have been held accountable more than ever before.

And when it comes to the fractured relationship between the Australian Government and our First Nations people, there has never been a more important time to take stock of the environment we live in, and have the ability to shape.

Recent years, full of frustration, dissatisfaction and trauma felt by First Nations communities nationwide have manifested into movements of solidarity playing out on the national stage. Rallies and protests to bring awareness to the continued mistreatment and displacement of First Nations Australians have been front and centre on news cycles; charged up voices refusing to be dimmed.

This year, Australia has the chance to listen. Properly listen and decide on a hugely significant change to the Constitution – one that will mean a historic shift for First Nations Australians everywhere.

The country's first referendum in twenty-four years is taking place in 2023, putting the spotlight on a country facing a unique crossroads.

Unlike the 1999 referendum, which proposed Australia become a Republic, 2023 offers Australians the opportunity to enact a historic change to the Constitution; recognising the First Peoples of Australia by enshrining an official Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice.

The Voice itself is a proposed independent, permanent advisory body, that would advise the Australian Parliament and Government on the matters and policies that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples nationwide.

An embedded Voice within the Australian Constitution stands to be groundbreaking if it is brought to fruition. Not only does it guarantee First Nations

communities an avenue to help inform the legal decisions that impact their lives, but it will stand as a permanent seat at the table – one that successive Governments cannot remove.

Since the 1920s, there have been First Nations advocates fighting for their right to be heard, their perspectives acknowledged, their advice implemented within Australian society. Now, over one hundred years later, the permanence of an official Voice to Parliament is up for discussion.

In June, the passing of a bill to alter the Constitution and enable The Voice passed in federal parliament; fifty-two votes to nine leading the Senate to pass the bill, ultimately confirming the wording of constitutional change that will be proposed to Australians. Though a critical moment in Indigenous history in Australia, the passing of the bill – just like The Voice in general – brought heated conversation from both sides.

The Uluru Youth Network

In the throes of this push for change is a group of passionate young First Nations peoples who have come together over a shared goal for justice, and a permanent shift, when it comes to the acknowledgment of Australia's First Peoples.

Co-chaired by Allira Davis and Bridget Cama, the Uluru Youth Network has been crucial in providing a platform for young First Nations people who are passionate about structural and constitutional reform, to campaign and fight for change in a space that can have impact.

Davis, a Cobble Cobble woman from the Barungum and Birrigubba Nations – and Cama, a Wiradjuri First Nations and Pasifika Fijian woman from Lithgow, NSW, and with connections to the Cudgegong River outside Mudgee, have been working together since 2019.

Meeting at a senior leadership dialogue driven by The Uluru Dialogue, both Davis and Cama realised quickly that though there were many voices in the room advocating for positive change, an important one was missing. That of the youth.

“We knew that young voices were missing,” Davis explains.

“We knew that we needed a youthful perspective. We needed young people's perspectives and opinions, so we created the Uluru Youth Network in 2019. We held the Uluru Youth Summit in 2019. We bonded over that and a common goal, a common justice. We come from similar yet different backgrounds, but we somehow work really well together.”

Voice, Treaty, Truth

The Uluru Youth Network directly works with the Uluru Dialogue which, in itself, represents the cultural authority of the Uluru Statement. The Statement, born out of a series of dialogues held across Australia, culminated in a National Constitutional Convention held at Uluru in 2017.

In its final form, The Uluru Statement From The Heart exists as an invitation to the Australian people to walk with First Nations peoples in creating a new future through a series of key reforms. Key to the statement is the establishment of The Voice, and a Makarrata Commission,

From left
Uluru Youth Dialogue Co-Chairs Allira Davis and Bridget Cama at the National Press Club for the Sydney Peace Prize.



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to supervise a process of creating agreements and truth-telling about First Nations history.

Over 250 delegates signed their names to The Statement; these voices came together to advocate for a new Australia that can truly start to benefit its First Nations peoples. As Cama reflects, the importance of laying a sustainable foundation for young people, and generations to come, is a key element of The Statement.

“There were youth delegates to the Uluru Convention, they’re signatories to the statement itself,” she states.

“WE BONDED OVER THAT AND A COMMON GOAL, A COMMON JUSTICE.”

“There’s over 250 signatures and young people are part of that. You only need to look at the Uluru Statement to see what the delegates to the regional dialogues talked about. They talked about young people. There’s so much emphasis on young people and our future generations. They did that hard work so that young people and future generations aren’t experiencing the same thing that they experienced.”

Building the Uluru Youth Dialogue

The creation of the Uluru Youth Dialogue in 2019 landed with urgency but, unbeknownst to everyone involved, would be the last chance for in-person networking, sharing, and learning for the short-term future.

Taking place in Cairns over three days at the end of 2019, Davis and Cama developed programming that encouraged and nurtured the shared passions of those in the burgeoning collective.



Davis notes that the confidence and conviction in everyone’s belief was already well-established, but the Uluru Youth Dialogue simply existed to give them the step up they needed to have their presence solidified.

“We just wanted to boost them up with the resources and support,” she tells *Rolling Stone*. “I don’t think I’m necessarily a manager, but I think I’m someone who is just helping another young person be provided with the tools to go out and inform their communities about the Uluru Statement.”

Over fifty young First Nations people gathered to discuss the Statement, and learn about its mandate of ‘Voice, Treaty and Truth’. Across the duration of the dialogue, the members of the Uluru Youth Network were able to identify tangible actions they could take home to their community, where the work on ground would continue.

“By that point, Bridget and I were bawling our eyes out, because we were just so amazed by the calibre [of people],” Davis remembers.

Allira and Bridget at the Australian Women’s Weekly lunch.

“We shouldn’t be shocked at all, but it’s just all the very like-minded people in the room. It was such a powerful experience for both of us, and very purposeful as well.”

Strength Built Upon Strength

For both Davis and Cama, their work in this space would not be possible without the support of their elders and community leaders, whose tireless work in the years previous to their entry to this realm had already begun to open doors.

When they met and developed the Uluru Youth Network, both Davis and Cama were in the early stages of their careers. Davis, having worked in the public and private sectors, came into the Co-Chair role after a number of years volunteering for the Uluru Dialogue. Cama, meanwhile, arrived after completing a Law Degree at UNSW, before landing a research assistant role for Professor Megan Davis.

Now spearheading a collective of their own and becoming models of influence themselves within the Uluru Youth

Network, the Co-Chairs reflect on their evolution and the support they have received from those who have come before them.

“It’s been a pretty unique space to work in, we have two amazing Co-Chairs of the Uluru Dialogue who are women, and they have such a unique style of leadership,” Cama says of Professor Davis and Patricia Anderson AO.

“The strategic thought that goes into guiding our campaign of the Uluru Dialogue is filled with immense intelligence, lived experience; commitment and taking the mandate of the Uluru Statement

“IF THE REFERENDUM IS NOT SUCCESSFUL, WE WILL BEAR THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT. IF THE REFERENDUM IS SUCCESSFUL, THEN WE CAN START TO MOVE FORWARD.”

and what First Nations people said really seriously. There’s a lot of love and generosity too.”

“Allira and I are both two young women, very early in our careers, who have the opportunity to create this space. That’s only come because we’ve got the support of our senior leadership. There’s a lot of awesome men in that space as well;

they gave up their space to allow us to do this work. To allow young people to be active.”

No Progress Without Challenge

Of course, the journey towards structural, political, and societal reform is rarely a smooth one. For Davis, Cama, and the Uluru Youth Network, the onset of COVID threw the most unexpected of spanners into the works.

Isolating the collective from one another and stunting the momentum generated at the youth summit at the end of 2019, Davis and Cama were forced to engage the level of generational resilience inbuilt in both of them, to keep the spirit and core message alive.

Davis spotlights the work her family has been doing in the community for years as continued inspiration. Stoking the passion she brings to her work, she is driven by the potential that young people (and Australians generally speaking) have to set new standards and achieve a positive ripple effect of change.

“When you know what our people go through, you really gain a strong passion and strength; resilience to just keep going in fighting for what’s right and impacting change,” she says.

“A lot of my aunts and uncles, my mother, have been involved in our community since they moved down to Eagleby (South East Queensland). Just having role models and people to look up to, people who fight every day and work in communities to fight the injustices our people will experience, gives you an open mind. People work so hard in communities – props to people who do work in communities, because it’s a hard job.”

Knowing the Uluru Youth Network had the support of the Uluru Dialogue, and those elders who maintained stature and positions of leadership and influence, was an important ingredient; particularly when things were at their most unsettled.

“This has grown really organically, it’s not something we had this big plan of doing,” laughs Cama. “It’s grown over time and we’ve had to be flexible. We’ve lasted through two or three years of COVID; that



Allira and Bridget with former Governor General Quentin Bryce at the Sydney Peace Prize award ceremony at Sydney Town Hall.

required us, as Co-Chairs, to be creative and think, ‘How do we keep our young people engaged through a global crisis?’ We were talking about bigger picture stuff when [the elders were] trying to deal with the every day of COVID. It’s definitely the most challenging work that I’ve ever done in my life, but it’s also the most rewarding.”

“Having the support of elders and of senior people in the Uluru Dialogue, and in our own communities, really gives us a sense of purpose. To have them behind us in this work just means so much; it means that we can do our work in a meaningful way. In a culturally appropriate way too, to make sure that everything is done properly, whilst also just driving this on the ground. We see ourselves as the little foot soldiers for our elders, who have paved the way and allowed us to have the opportunities we’ve had. We wouldn’t have that without our elders’ decades worth of advocacy and fight for justice.”

The Marathon (to Referendum) Continues

With mere weeks to go until Australia heads to the ballot post, the work of the Uluru Youth Dialogue isn't slowing down. Campaigning to educate Australians about The Voice, The Uluru Statement From The Heart, and more importantly, the weight each vote has, continues through their work.

"NOT ALL FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE ARE GOING TO AGREE."

And knowing that the conversation surrounding The Voice and the proposed reforms in The Uluru Statement From The Heart has been a divisive one as even within First Nations communities, there isn't 100% consensus on the vote either way.

"Not all First Nations people are going to agree," Davis admits.

"I think that throughout the dialogue process, people should realise that once the First Nations voice is enshrined into the constitution, there's still a process after that where we have to talk about the model and yarn to communities about what it is. It's all about community members, community leaders, and people who feel voiceless, having a voice."

"Because it's in the constitution, it doesn't mean it's going to be [affecting only] the top level - these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders who have been there since day dot. It will be the people on the ground actually being affected by these policies."

Although their work has already generated groundswell and support in the wider First Nations arena, meaningful conversations can't be a one-and-done situation.

Education is, and remains, key. "We have a huge amount of support behind us already, a lot of goodwill from Australians," she says.

"There are still a lot of people who don't know a lot about it, who don't know how they're going to vote. That's where the conversations are most important. At the end of the day, we just want to make sure that Australians feel like they can make an informed decision. You have to make a decision that aligns with you, as a person. It is a privilege to vote. We're very privileged in this country, to have a right to vote. It is the Australian people, through this vote on the referendum, that will be able to shape what the future of Australia looks like. As young people, I think we feel that immensely."

Regardless of what side of the referendum you fall on, there's no denying that

Australia sits on the precipice of massive change. Recognising the importance of one's right to vote is the first important step Australians can take, no matter how you're deciding to use it.

"If the referendum is not successful, we will bear the consequences of that. If the referendum is successful, then we can start to move forward as a nation and as peoples. Most importantly, as Australians, start to unpack and address some of that unfinished business," Davis adds.

"There's a lot of noise out there, so we need to focus on what this actually is. Keep it out of politicians' hands. It was gifted by First Nations people to the rest of Australia to walk with us. It is a people's movement, it always has been. This is not about politicians or politics. It's about creating an Australia we want to live in, and that we're proud of." ®

The Uluru Youth Dialogue at the Parramatta Indigenous All Stars 2022.



UP SHIT'S CREEK:

Could Sewerage Be The Paddle in Australia's Water Crisis?

WORDS BY
JAMES SHACKELL

**WOULD YOU DRINK
RECYCLED WATER?
WE'LL LET YOU IN
ON A SECRET: YOU
ALREADY ARE.**

"IF YOU WANT to see what half of Melbourne's sewerage looks like, look down there," Kris says.

I move cautiously to the lip of the canal and peer over, expecting some turgid river of nameless sludge. Instead, there's a briskly moving stream of...yeah, water. Not particularly attractive water. It's grey and cloudy, the colour of an old cataract, and with occasionally familiar objects (let's call them 'objects') floating in the current. But definitely water.

As I watch, a rogue wet wipe goes sailing past. Black crows caw in the dead-looking pine trees, and the May sky is blue and clear. The air smells surprisingly good considering I'm standing at the mouth, so to speak, of Melbourne's biggest sewerage in-flow.

"There is no tap here. We can't turn this off," Kris says. "We treat all of Melbourne's west, all

of the north, and parts of the northeast. Some of that water down there came from a shower drain in the Yarra Valley."

Kris Coventry is an engineer and Process Improvement Team Leader at Melbourne's Western Treatment Plant (WTP), located in the forgotten, tumble-down town of Cocoroc, southwest of the city. Along with thirty other full-time staff, it's his job to treat two-hundred Olympic swimming pools of sewerage, every day, and keep 10,500 hectares of lagoons, fields, canals and wetlands working as nature and Victorian engineers intended.

The Western Treatment Plant is special, perhaps unique. It's mostly a natural system. There are no chemicals involved. All it needs is gravity, sunlight and time to turn Melbourne's sewage into, more or less, clean water, which is then



discharged into Port Phillip Bay. The water that flows in would probably kill you. The water that flows out you can basically swim in.

"It's astonishing really, considering it was built in 1897," Kris says. "The Victorians really knew their stuff. This is the biggest waste treatment plant in the world, in terms of area. Nowhere else comes close. We often have international delegates come over, and they just stare at it and just go, 'Wow...'"

I'm here because, at some point in the not too distant future, it's likely I'll be drinking that water down in the canal. And so will you. As Australia gears up for another El Nino period, and with climate change threatening water security around the world, questions like, 'Where does our water come from?' and 'What do we do with it?' have become kind of important. The human race is always about three days away from dying of thirst, and it's no longer a gigantic imaginative leap to imagine some Mad Max hellscape where civilisations wage war over

bottles of Evian. We're not quite there yet, obviously, but with that in mind, governments everywhere are increasingly looking to diversify their water portfolios, from catchments and

"... IF YOU LOSE SEWERAGE, THEN THINGS CAN QUICKLY GO ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE."

dams to desalination plants, aquifers and (yep) purified recycled wastewater. AKA sewerage.

"Every year, the next drought is one year closer," Kris says, staring down at the current.

"And if you lose sewerage, then things can quickly go zombie apocalypse."

This stuff is particularly important here in Australia. We're the driest inhabited continent in the world. Around seventy percent of the country is arid or semi-arid land, which means it gets less than 250mm rainfall per year.

In 2020, New South Wales alone had nearly fifty towns counting down to Day Zero, the recognised industry term for 'Nothing Left To Drink'. Australia is rich in a lot of things, but H2O isn't one of them, and our climate is temperamental at the best of times. Which is why we have one of the most sophisticated national water management schemes on the planet. "When we talk about water security, we have to assess our options," says Danielle Francis from the Water Service Association of Australia. "The big ones are surface water - that's rivers and dams. Next you've got groundwater and aquifers. And then you have desalination and what we call 'purified recycled water'."



NATURE AND ENGINEERING UNITE

The Western Treatment Plant, in Cocoroc, is a remarkable feat of engineering and ecology, processing Melbourne's sewage while nurturing vast wetlands, safeguarding public health and the environment.

Where your water comes from depends on where you live, but as a general rule, about eighty-two percent of Australia's water comes from the surface: that's dams, catchments and rivers. Eight percent comes from groundwater aquifers, which not every city is lucky enough to have. Four percent comes from six major desalination plants, which were all built during the Millennium Drought (1997 to 2009, and said to be the worst drought since European colonisation). And six percent comes from recycled water, which (at the moment) is mostly used for non-residential stuff like commercial cooling and irrigating crops.

"The problem is, with climate change, the reliability of traditional sources of water isn't as good," Danielle says. "We need what we call rain-fall independent sources of water, which is basically purified recycled water and desal."

It's not just drought either. Every time there's major flooding and storms, or wind-driven ash from bushfires, Australia's surface water becomes compromised. Impurities in the catchments that would usually settle over time, making water treatment easy, churn around and clog the system. Heavy metals wash in from industrial sites. Cremated gum trees settle on the surface.

"When the Queensland floods started coming through in 2011, the major treatment plant

up there was basically dealing with mud. And you can't treat that to drinking water standards," Danielle says. "By having a desal plant running one-hundred percent, they could take the pressure off the treatment plant."

Unfortunately, as anyone who's looked at a weather map in the last five years knows, 'once-in-a-generation' climate events now seem to happen approximately every Tuesday, so staking eighty percent of your country's drinking water on rivers and dams is no longer a viable strategy. State and federal governments are keenly aware of this, which is why they're looking at *all* contingencies. Recycled sewerage among them.

"The phrase we use is 'All options on the table'," says Danielle. "We know we can take water from any source and treat it to whatever quality we need to. We've known how to do this from a technological standpoint for a long time."

What Danielle's getting at is that drinking recycled wastewater isn't as controversial as you might think. Thirty-five cities around the world already do it, and forty more are looking into it. You can sip recycled water in Cape Town, London, Barcelona and Bangalore. It emerges from taps up and down the Californian coast. In Australia, we already have the Western Corridor Recycled Water Project, built as a drought back-up in Queensland in 2008, plus a stormwater-to-drinking-water plant in Orange, NSW.

But in Australia, the big test case for recycled wastewater is Perth.

In the 1960s, Perth got eighty-eight percent of its water from the surface. Today, that number is

about ten percent. The city is one of Australia's true water diversity success stories, and a possible blueprint for the rest of the country.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Western Australian government started to realise that what they were going through wasn't a drought, because droughts end. Facing population growth and unrelenting climate change, Perth simply wasn't going to be able to keep drinking rainwater forever. So they began to diversify, first with desalination in the 2000s, then purified recycled water in 2017. Over the last ten years, the government has increased the volume of recycled water in Western Australia by about seventy percent.

"Perth just knew, decades ago, that this was coming," Danielle says. "They said we have to stop talking about drought, because this is just the new normal, and we need to prepare for it."

But even Perth is a late adopter when it comes to purified recycled water. Some of the first modern schemes emerged in California in the 1960s, with places like Montebello Forebay pioneering the use of recycled wastewater to recharge underground aquifers. The next big one was Windhoek in Namibia, in 1968, which became the first city in the world to produce drinking water directly from municipal wastewater. In other words, this isn't radical science or anything. We've understood how to treat almost any water to drinkable standard for a long, long time. It's two hydrogen atoms, one oxygen atom. That's the secret to all life.

"This isn't a technical problem. It's a social problem," Danielle says. "We have to bring the community along for the journey."

The 4WD rattles as we drive along one of the service roads connecting the various lagoons of the Western Treatment Plant. Kris is taking me to the outflow, where the treated wastewater reaches the end of its journey and flows into Port Phillip Bay. We pass huge ponds covered in acres of white plastic. Under there, biogas is being farmed to generate electricity.

"We're actually self-sufficient here," Kris says. "We generate about 130 percent of the electricity we need. It's a similar process to what happens in your stomach: the microbes break down the waste and release methane. We seem to get the most power at about thirty-seven degrees, which is coincidentally the same temperature as the human body."

From these covered pools, the water flows gently south, rippling along carefully engineered gradients into the lagoons: giant man-made rectangular pools, the first of which was built in the 1930s.

This is where the real magic happens. Water slowly spills diagonally, from lagoon to lagoon, zigzagging back and forth, becoming more pure with each pass.

JAMES SHACKELL is a Melbourne-based freelance writer and regular contributor to *Red Bull*, *Frankie*, and *Urban List*.

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**"IT'S ONLY
WASTEWATER
IF YOU
WASTE IT."**

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COCOROC SWIMMING
POOLS CIRCA 1900.

"It takes between a month and two months for a shower in Melbourne to make its way to the discharge," Kris says. "And during that intervening time, it's just sunlight, nature and microbiological activity doing its thing."

Soon our way is blocked. There's another car moving along the one-way track. "Probably a twitcher," Kris says. "See?" He points beyond the car, and I can see a flock of water birds shimmy up from the long grass.

This is something I hadn't expected. Melbourne's biggest sewerage treatment plant is also one of Australia's most valuable migratory bird habitats. In terms of diversity and abundance of bird life, this man made patchwork of wetlands and lagoons literally rivals Kakadu National Park. Around one third of *all* bird species in Australia have been spotted here. As such, the plant maintains about four-thousand bird-watching permits. This means that areas of Melbourne's critical water infrastructure, which I assumed would be off-limits, perhaps patrolled by guards holding machine guns, are instead populated by boffins with binoculars. They also seem to have right of way. The twitcher gives us a disgruntled look as we turn off to let him past.

Finally we make it to the outflow, where the last lagoon, built in the 1980s, empties into the sea. By now the water has gone through a couple of months of purification, and the natural microbes have done their busy little work. You could swim here, if you wanted to. Journalistic thoroughness notwithstanding, I decide to watch from a safe distance.

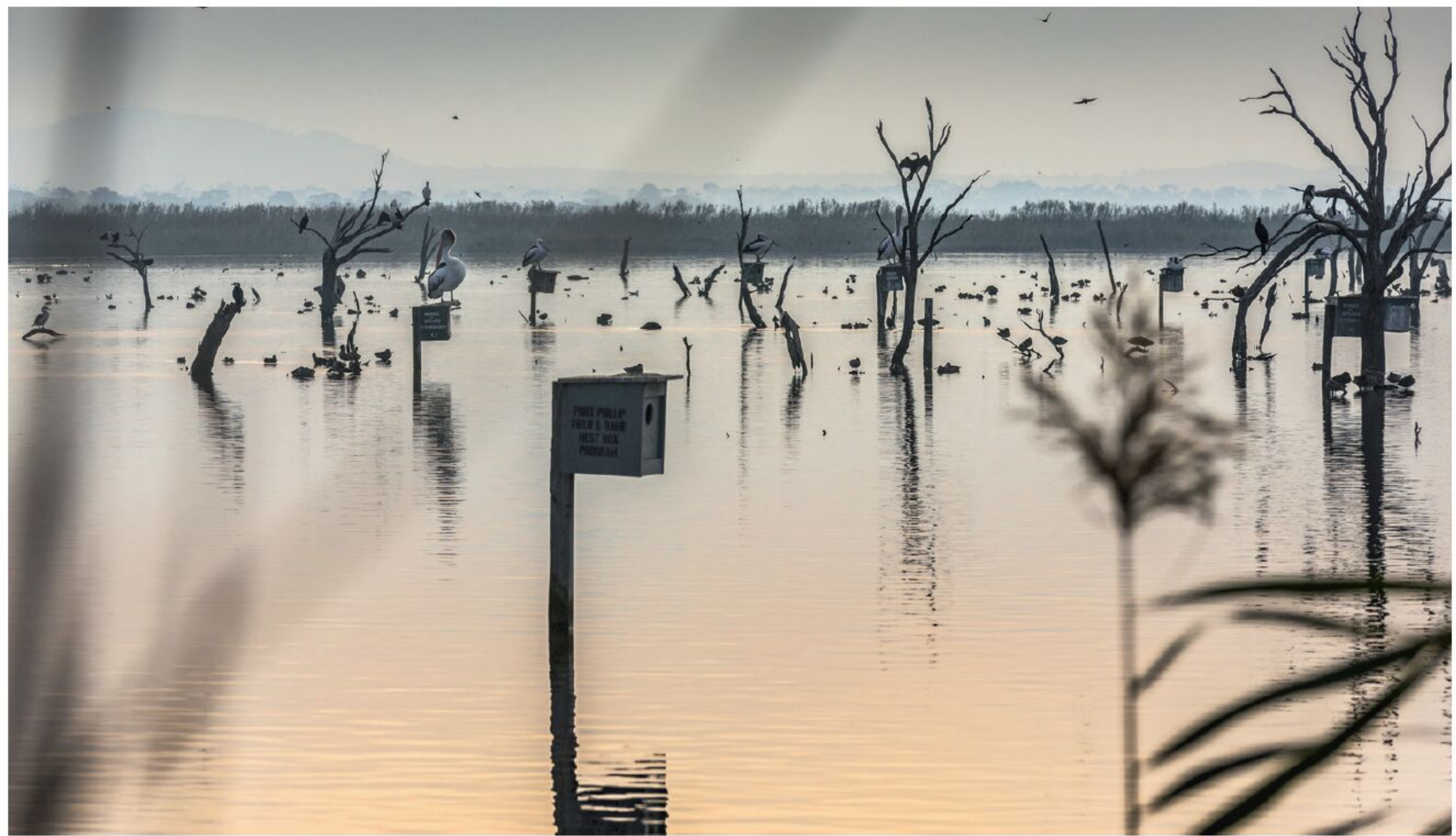
There's not much at the outflow. Just tidal wetlands and weedy scrub where roughly eighteen-thousand shorebirds come to feed, and some small markers fifty yards offshore, warning boats

"THIS ISN'T A TECHNICAL PROBLEM. IT'S A SOCIAL PROBLEM."

not to stray too close. A small, nondescript channel of blue water is the final evidence of Melbourne's waste. As we look out to sea, a flock of pelicans soars past, high overhead.

"The birds eat the bugs and grubs that live in the intertidal zone," Kris says. "And those bugs in turn eat the phytoplankton, which in turn feeds off our nutrients."

The Western Treatment Plant is allowed to discharge three-thousand tonnes of nitrogen into Port Phillip Bay each year. That's what makes



BIRD HAVEN

Unused lagoons at the Western Treatment Plant now serve as thriving bird sanctuaries.

this place bird mecca. In a lot of ways, this processing plant literally feeds the bay. During the Millennium Drought, when Melbourne's water use hit all-time lows, the lack of nutrients flowing from WTP threw Port Phillip's whole ecological system out of whack. Seagrass in Portarlington massively declined. Fish stocks were way down.

"It's this bizarre thing," Kris says. "This plant has been here so long that a lot of the ecology of the bay relies on it."

Clouds gather over the wind-blown sea. Out there, invisible water molecules are being evaporated to fall on the land and start the whole cycle again. And this is another thing that doesn't get talked about much in the whole treated sewage debate. Apart from fresh water locked away in polar ice caps, literally all water is recycled. All the time. That's how water works.

This sounds like an obvious thing, something you learn in primary school, but it's so obvious that it often gets taken for granted. The water that comes out of your tap is the same water that was drunk by dinosaurs. If you live in a city near a river mouth, chances are that the water in your glass has already gone through seven sets of kidneys before it gets to you. And that's just on *this* journey. Apart from meteors, UFOs and a sprinkling of hydrogen atoms, Earth is pretty much a closed system: nothing gets in, nothing gets out. And, notwithstanding some seriously expensive, inefficient and highly flammable tech, you can't *make* new water. At least not in volumes that will do civilisation any good.

That leaves us with two options: we can find new sources of water, like desalination and recycling, or we can learn to use water better.

"I asked a colleague the other day, if you had \$10 million to spend on water, what would you spend it on," Kris says, "and he immediately said: education."

"The top priority is always water conservation," Danielle agrees, "teaching people how to use water properly. We shouldn't be spending a single dollar on water infrastructure until we're making sure we're squeezing the value from every last drop."

The research suggests that education does work. As a rule, the more we learn about purified recycled water, or any new water technology, the more open we become to using it. The more we learn about water conservation, the better we get at it. Squeamishness is really just a symptom of ignorance.

It's the big reason why the Western Treatment Plant runs school excursions most days of the week: you need kids to see this stuff in order to value it.

Lucas Van Vuuren, the guy who pioneered Namibia's Windhoek recycled water scheme back in the 1960s, had a saying: "Water should be judged on its quality, not its history." What he meant was that it doesn't matter where water comes from, because all water eventually comes from everywhere. What matters is how good that water is, and what we do with it.

"It's only wastewater if you waste it," Danielle says. "Just look at Cape town; the famous Day Zero situation. In 2018, you had people queuing to get a jerry can full of water. They hit a point where they knew they couldn't build their way out of this. There wasn't time.

"But they were lucky - they got rain." ®



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THE GREATEST COMEBACK

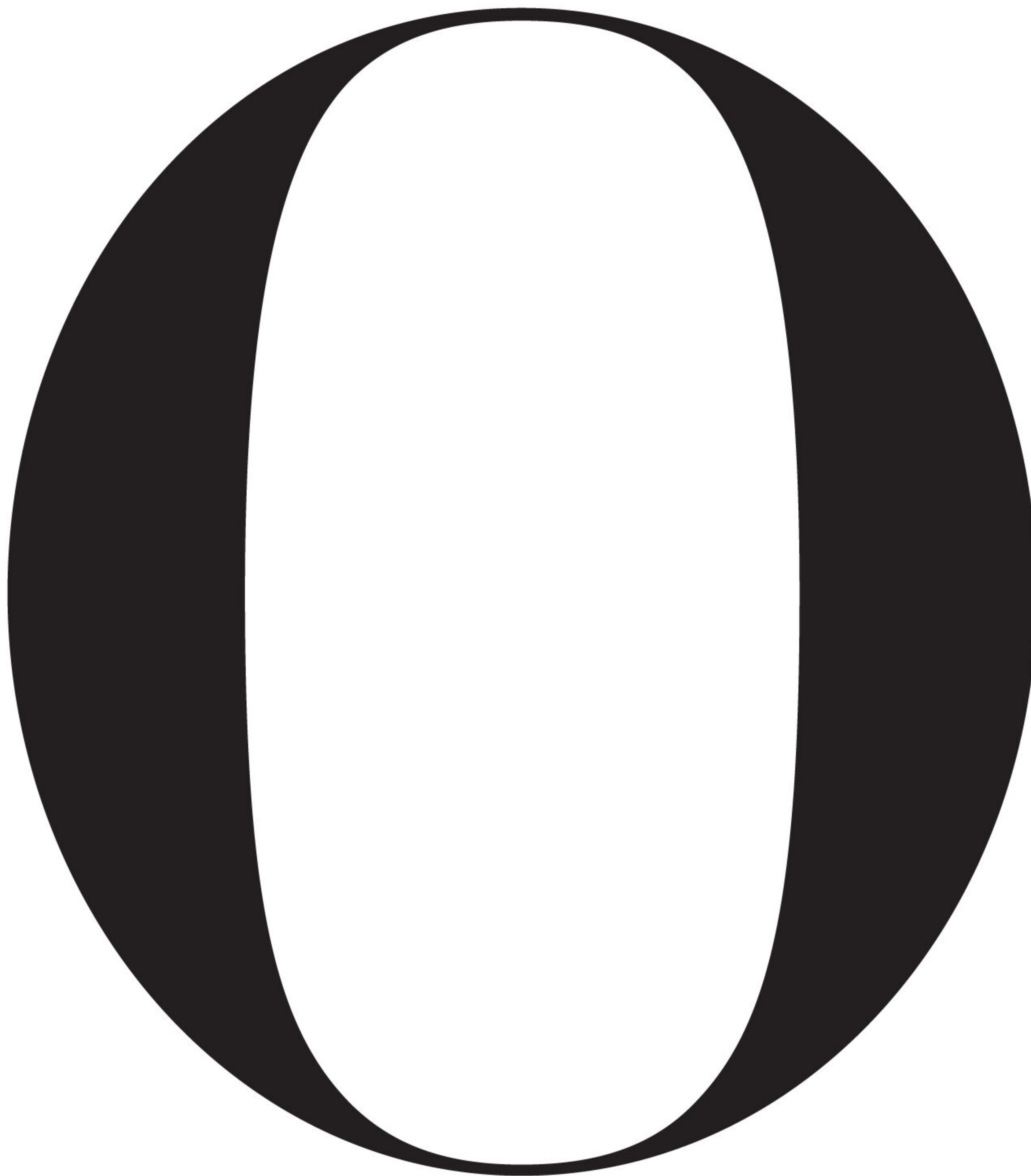
AT THE START OF THE EIGHTIES, TINA TURNER WAS
BROKE, ON THE RUN FROM IKE, AND PLAYING CHEESY
CONVENTIONS. THE INSIDE STORY OF HER
MIRACULOUS SECOND ACT

BY DAVID BROWNE

THAT ALMOST WASN'T



TINA TURNER



NE DAY in London's Kensington district in 1983, Tina Turner's resurrection finally appeared within reach. The prior decade had been one of stage-shaking triumphs, personal nightmares, various degrees of mortification, and now, a chance at possible redemption. But as musician and producer Martyn Ware soon learned, Turner's past was never in the rearview mirror – and on that day, it was terrifyingly in her face.

The previous year, Turner had sung on an edgy, pulsating remake of the Temptations hit “Ball of Confusion,” and now Ware – who had co-helmed that track, had co-founded the Human League, and was a member of Heaven 17 – was meeting with her to map out another collaboration. Arriving at what he recalls as “a beautiful kind of mansion” where Turner was staying, Ware took note of security guards outside. To his shock, Ware says, he was told that Turner's ex-husband, Ike, who had previously served 30 days for drug possession and wasn't averse to shooting at the newspaper-delivery guy or making threats on his wife's life, was in the city and calling; he was apparently trying to scale the walls of the building to demand money from Tina. “It was still going on then,” Ware says. “And I thought, ‘Tina is having to deal with this on a continuous basis.’ She did everything with such grace, poise, and good humour. She must have been hurting underneath it all.”

Ultimately, Turner and Ware decided to make over Al Green's “Let's Stay Together.” The track would be the next step on the road to *Private Dancer*, the 1984 album that would reestablish Turner as a musical force and a public symbol for overcoming crushing personal adversity. “I think people actually go and see her not for the songs necessarily – they go to see her for what she represents,” her friend David Bowie would later say. “The baggage of her past travels with her, and they're going to see somebody who, like a phoenix from the ashes, has risen.... She's certainly been through far worse than many of us have been through.”

Given how much she was embraced by old admirers, the MTV generation, and the industry – the holy-grail triumvirate in the music business at the time – Turner's comeback should have been a cakewalk. Once the public learned what she'd endured with Ike, by way of a *People* interview in 1981, there were few pop stars more beloved. But the jarring reemergence of her ex-husband on an otherwise productive day in England would be far from the only hurdle in one of pop's most unexpected returns. Even then, with the world cheering her on, Turner's second act was never a given. At any moment, it could have been derailed by ageism, sceptics who wondered if she could make it on her own, music never released in her home country, and at least one racist music executive. Triggered in part by memories of life with Ike, she almost tripped herself up by not wanting to revisit the music that had made her a star to begin with. Only a series of happy accidents, combined with her unbridled belief in herself, would save her.

BY THE START of the Eighties, it was hard to imagine an even remotely bright future for Tina Turner. For many years, she'd been a star, fronting a band with Ike that raced like a locomotive through the pop landscape. Ann Bullock had wanted to be a nurse, but after meeting Ike and his band, the Kings of Rhythm, at a night-club in St. Louis, Bullock was reborn, eventually renamed by her soon-to-be-husband as Tina Turner.

The two had a handful of R&B hits before crossing over to the rock world, thanks in part to opening for The Rolling Stones and remaking rock hits like “Proud Mary” and “Honky Tonk Women” in their own brassy, soul-revival style. Ike may have been the guitarist, boss, and bandleader, but all eyes were on his wife, who had the throaty, sensual delivery of a great gospel or blues singer and uninhibited dance moves unlike almost anything seen in pop. Her

DAVID BROWNE wrote about *Bootsy Collins impostors* in December for *Rolling Stone US*.

TINA TURNER

version of Otis Redding's "I've Been Loving You Too Long," which found her stroking her microphone, was undeniably erotic, and Turner herself was arguably the first major Black female rock star.

At the time, few knew the horrors of her life offstage and in studios with her abusive and womanising husband. "Ike was beating me with phones, with shoes, with the hangers," she relayed in her first memoir, *I, Tina*. "Choking me, punching me – it wasn't just slapping anymore." Right before one show, he punched her so hard that he broke her jaw, and she had to still go onstage and sing. In 1976, at age 36, she left him and found herself raising four children while drowning in an ocean of debt. To earn a living, she took any work she could: on cheesy TV variety shows and in Vegas, where she resorted to covers of dance hits like "Disco Inferno"; during one dinnertime show, she accidentally dropped her mic into a customer's steak. "Suddenly the booking agents didn't think I had the ability to work without Ike," she said. "It was like starting over again."

Turner's relaunch began just as the Eighties began – and in the first of many such examples, it almost failed. R&B and disco were out, New Wave was in, and Turner again was musically adrift. Roger Davies, a young Australian manager, decided to see one of her regular gigs: two shows a night at the Venetian Room at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco in 1980. At first, Davies was underwhelmed by the garishness of her show, which included Turner in gaudy Bob Mackie dresses, four backup dancers, and covers of standards like "Fever." Reviewing her opening night, the *Oakland Tribune* wrote that Turner's show was "geared to the visiting convention crowd."

But luckily for Turner, Davies stayed for the wilder second set. "People were standing on tables," he recalled in *I, Tina*. "The chandeliers were shaking." Before long, and with Turner's consent, Davies fired two of her dancers and

hired new musicians. "She wanted to rock," says drummer Jack Bruno, one of the new recruits. "There were other tunes she would bring and put her touch on, which usually meant faster tempos. That was her signature thing, how she made songs her own." To save money, the new musicians were outfitted in matching black karate suits (instead of the more costly tuxedos of the previous lineup). "Ike was the musician, the bandleader, the director, the business manager," Turner said in 1981. "Now, that falls on me. That part is hard. I must make decisions I didn't have to make before."

As she told *Rolling Stone* at the time, "I want to get back into the rock of it!" Turner was still without a record deal and longed to be on par with the biggest bands of the time. "She wanted to be up there with the Stones and be mainstream and have hits of her own," says Ann Behringer, one of her backup dancers and singers during this period – and with Davies' help, that goal began taking shape. Rod Stewart invited her to join him on *Saturday Night Live*, and Turner opened for the Stones in New Jersey.

During those early days of her rebirth, Turner still packed her set with Ike-era singles like "Proud Mary" and "River Deep, Mountain High." But she often opened with a new addition to her repertoire – her own version of Stewart's sleazy deep cut "Foolish Behavior," renamed "Kill His Wife." The lyrics alone were startling: "Why I wanna kill my wife?/I have this urge to take her life/Been planning for years to get rid of her/Not divorce, I really do mean to kill her." During the instrumental break, Turner took the intensity one step further by grabbing a shocking prop – a noose, which she twirled around like a lasso.

Bruno felt that Turner was going for something stagey. "I'm not sure about her thought process, but she liked the theatrics of it," he says. "The audience was politely applauding, but they didn't know what to think." Again, few knew what Turner was coping with after she left

Ike – death threats that made her fear for her life so much that she briefly carried a .38 and hired bodyguards. During one of her sets at the Fairmont, Ike arrived with an entourage. "She got super anxious," Behringer says, "but was a professional and acted like everything was fine." Turner never commented on the noose, and it didn't remain in her show long. Disquieting imagery aside, that rage and defiance was the first hint of the way Turner would become a heroine to women who'd suffered from domestic violence and were looking for a way to survive and reset their lives.

STARTING WITH DAVIES sticking around for her Fairmont show, the happy-accident aspect of Turner's return continued with James Brown. In 1982, British Electric Foundation – a partnership between Ware and Ian Craig Marsh – was working on a collection of synthed-up covers of songs from the Sixties and Seventies. The duo had enlisted Brown to front their remake of "Ball of Confusion." But at the last minute, negotiations with Brown fell through, they say, and suddenly the producers were left with a backing track and no singer.

To Turner's good fortune, the career-salvaging coincidences continued. In the offices of Virgin Records in London, Ware was bemoaning the fate of his project when Ken Berry, one of the founders of the label, walked by and overheard his predicament. Berry mentioned his friend Tina Turner: Maybe she'd be available? Ware had just seen her play in London and was reminded of the power of her voice and persona. "I was blown away by her talent and energy," he recalls. "And I thought, 'Well, if anybody can do it, Tina could.'"

When Ware offered Turner and Davies plane tickets to London, they accepted – but the first phase of her comeback almost fell through. When she learned that the song in question was "Ball of Confusion," she "freaked out," Davies later recalled in *I, Tina*.





“I WAS BLOWN AWAY
BY HER TALENT.
I THOUGHT, ‘IF
ANYBODY COULD DO IT,
TINA COULD.’”

THE SUPERSTAR

Turner in 1990. *Private Dancer* would go on to sell more than 5 million copies, and helped make her a global icon.

TINA TURNER

“She was so afraid of being put back into any kind of category like ‘oldies’ or ‘R&B.’” (In Ware’s memory, Turner had rehearsed the song before, but may have been unnerved by the fact that the “band” amounted to a bank of synthesizers.) Eventually, Turner went along with the idea, cutting the vocal in one day. Whether the song and era evoked memories of Ike was unclear, but she seemed ready to move on. “That was quite tricky, to sing that song – it sounds like there’s more than one voice on it,” Turner said afterward to Ware. “And I’m saying, ‘It’s the Temptations, Tina,’” he recalls. “She said, ‘Who are they?’ My theory is that she turned her back on soul music. It’s partly [Ike] and partly that she felt more connection with the world of rock & roll.”

In another setback, “Ball of Confusion” was only released in Europe. But the song’s ominous, herky-jerky throb was a universe removed from the soul grooves she had thrown down with Ike. In that way, it was a success, announcing to the world that a new Tina Turner had arrived. In its wake, Capitol Records expressed interest in her, and she and John Carter, an A&R man who’d become a Turner champion, began laying down tracks.

A Turner revival now seemed possible – until, again, it almost wasn’t. In 1983, Capitol replaced its team with new management, who began questioning some of the projects in the works. In an infamous comment made to Carter, first reported on PopMatters in 2009, an unnamed executive informed Davies that he was dropping Turner from the label’s roster, slurring her as an “old n---r douchebag.” (After audio of that comment was included in the 2021 documentary *Tina*, Capitol issued a statement saying the company was “under different ownership and management, and we’re only now learning of those reprehensible and appalling comments.”) Dropping to his knees in a meeting, Carter (as he told PopMatters) informed the boss that he wouldn’t leave the room until he called Davies to say he’d made “a mistake.” Eventually, the executive begrudgingly agreed to reverse his decision, while adding that the company would barely lift a finger to promote an album. Her new music would be dead on arrival.

To modernise her sound and image, Turner dragged her repertoire into the Eighties, too, incorporating Don Henley’s “Dirty Laundry”

and Bowie’s “Cat People (Putting Out Fire)” into her set. The Bowie association would lead to another pivotal, if accidental, moment in her life. In January 1983, Bowie was in New York to sign with EMI, and was asked what he was planning to do that evening. To the surprise of the staff, he announced he was going to see his favourite singer: Turner. Thanks to that endorsement, Davies unexpectedly received a request for more than 60 free tickets to the show, all for employees of the label. “I became infinitely more interesting to them after I got David’s seal of approval,” Turner said. “I didn’t know any of this until later.”

That night, Turner was booked into the Ritz, an art-deco club in the East Village that, reflecting Turner’s own transformation, couldn’t have been further removed from Vegas Strip ballrooms. When Turner first played the club, in 1981, Mick Jagger, Robert De Niro, Diana Ross, and Susan Sarandon were all in attendance. Now, thanks to “Ball of Confusion,” Turner’s return engagement in the first month of 1983 had another stellar guest list in the house – Bowie, Keith Richards, and tennis bad boy John McEnroe.

Dressed for part of the show in a black-leather minidress, Turner was up for the challenge: Her intro to “Proud Mary” was even more suggestive than usual, her renditions of the Bowie and Henley songs burned down the house, and a slow, simmering version of the Beatles’ “Help!” added a touch of real-life gravitas. At one point, Behringer turned toward the balcony that wrapped around most of the venue to see Turner’s all-star fans cheering her on. “You look up and there’s David Bowie and all these people, and it was like, ‘Whoa,’” she says. “They were all rooting for her 100 percent. They all idolised her.”

After the show, everyone gathered in the small VIP room off the office of club owner Jerry Brandt, which held ten people tops. Turner, who always insisted she didn’t drink or do drugs, playfully grabbed a champagne bottle and, in one of many flirty moments between them, pretended to pour it into Bowie’s mouth. According to photographer Bob Gruen, who was in the room, Bowie played along, although he was worried the champagne would spill on his clothes. The festivities carried on at Keith Richards’ room at the Plaza Hotel, where

Richards played piano, and food and alcohol were wheeled in until dawn. “Everyone was happy for Tina that night,” says Gruen. “She showed she could do it by herself; it didn’t have to be ‘Ike and Tina.’” As Turner later wrote, “For me, that night at the Ritz was the equivalent of going to the ball (minus the part about Prince Charming) because it changed my life dramatically.”

With that, work on what would become *Private Dancer* began, starting with Turner returning to London for another collaboration with Ware and Marsh. And again, Turner was less than enthralled with the songs they suggested, which included “Let’s Stay Together.” “Aren’t you guys into any rock & roll?” she asked. Again, Turner relented: as she admitted, “I had a crush on someone back in America,” so the song appealed to her. As with “Ball of Confusion,” her simmering take on the Al Green classic was initially not available in the States. Only after it had become a hit in the U.K. did Capitol deign to release it at home.

Still, nothing was guaranteed. Drummer Bruno thought Turner’s future so uncertain that he left the band. “I’d been doing it for three years, and it never changed,” he says. “We were playing the hotels, and I was like, ‘I’m done. I don’t know if this is going anywhere.’ Just goes to show you how much I knew.” One of his last gigs with her was a McDonald’s convention in Hawaii. (Bruno later rejoined the band after *Private Dancer* and continued as her drummer for decades.)

But the success of “Let’s Stay Together” finally sent *Private Dancer* into overdrive, and Davies and Carter scrambled to find producers and songs. One of them, “What’s Love Got to Do With It,” had already been rejected by other big names. Turner herself nearly passed. “I didn’t like it,” Turner said. “I didn’t think it was my style,” also dubbing it “wimpy.” But Davies persevered, and the single, which brought out the weariness and tenderness in Turner’s voice, would be the one that firmly announced to the world that Turner was reborn. It had taken only four years of expectations, crushed hopes, wrong turns, and slurs, but Turner finally arrived, and for good.

“The whole thing is about earning your way,” she later wrote in *I, Tina*, pondering advice to a child, “and you don’t really get there until you earn it.” ®

WHAT TINA TURNER MEANT TO ME

BY VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS

WHEN I WAS a child, my mother would play “Proud Mary” on repeat as I danced around our living room, singing along into my toy microphone at the top of my lungs. The power in her voice and in that song made me a lifelong fan of Tina Turner.

Tina Turner spoke a universal language. Through her music, she told stories of love and loss, of triumph and pain, and she told them in ways that people around the globe could understand and relate to. Her songs – and the strength with which she sang them – have moved millions.

So many of those songs were rooted in freedom, individuality, and self-determination – at a time when such concepts felt off-limits to Black female artists. But Tina Turner did more than just give voice to those values – she lived them. Onstage and off, she was unapologetically Tina. With her very presence representing an affront to the status quo, she stood tall and proud, demonstrating to the world that rock stars could look like her too, and reminding us all the power of living as our true, authentic selves.

The true, authentic Tina Turner was a global icon who left an indelible mark on American music and culture. Among countless awards and honours, the “Queen of Rock & Roll” was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame not just once, but twice. With Grammy wins in the pop, rock, and R&B categories, Tina Turner made an impact on a range of genres wider than many artists before her ever had. She helped evolve the music of our nation.

Tina Turner sacrificed a great deal to have the success that she did. Throughout her life, she endured racism, sexism, and domestic violence – experiences that nobody should ever have to face. But she met those challenges head-on with courage and conviction. As she later put it, experiences that “could have shattered me, instead became fuel for my journey, propelling me upward.” Those experiences became fuel for the journeys of so many others – listeners whom she inspired with her songs of struggle and overcoming. And today, her life remains a testament to all those who believe in what can be, unburdened by what has been.

Growing up, my mother often told me, “Kamala, you may be the first to do many things. Make sure you are not the last.” Throughout her life, Tina Turner was in fact the first to do many things. She was the first woman and the first Black person to appear on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, among other “firsts.” But through her lifelong work of mentoring and developing younger artists, she widened the path and made sure that she would not be the last.

Through her music and her style, Tina Turner changed the ways in which we express ourselves and enjoy ourselves. The joy she shared with us will live on in her music for as long as we continue to sing and dance along to it. **®**



UNDEFEATED Life’s challenges, Tina said, were “fuel for my journey, propelling me upward.”

**SHE STOOD TALL AND PROUD,
DEMONSTRATING TO THE
WORLD THAT ROCK STARS
COULD LOOK LIKE HER, TOO.**

SHE WAS MY SISTER

BY ROBBIE MONTGOMERY

Former Ikette

WHEN I FIRST met Tina, we had an instant connection. Back in those days, her name was “Little Ann.” I was sort of the crazy, funny one, and she was looking for a laugh. She had a real healthy, bust-out laugh. She never thought she was a great singer. She was a rough singer. [But] she was a great performer. Nobody could do it like her. She was an entertainer from her heart. We were all 21, just trying to make it.

Ike was very serious. The Ikettes and Tina would rehearse all the way in the car, rehearse in hotels. We would rehearse any place that he called a rehearsal. We didn’t realise we were making history because it wasn’t glamorous. We went to our gigs, travelled by bus, went to the hotel, rehearsed, and the next morning did the same thing over again. It was just trying to keep surviving, focusing on becoming the best.

I’ll never forget this reader [fortune teller] told Tina back in the Sixties that she would live in Europe and she would marry somebody there. She held onto that. She was looking for hope. We were all concerned about [Ike’s abuse]. Tina was like a sister to me. We would try to get her to leave. We talked about it all the time, every time it happened. Even though it didn’t happen in front of us, we knew what happened. Back in the day, you didn’t know what a person was going through behind doors. Eventually, she came out and told her story. It was inspiring to a lot of women – even though your past might be muddled up, you can overcome it. I was happy for her, proud with my chest sticking out. It always inspired me: If she’s still doing it, maybe one day I’ll be able to do it. I will always love her. The bond that we have will always be in my heart. ®

HAIL TO THE QUEEN

BY ROB SHEFFIELD

WE’LL NEVER LIVE in a world without Tina Turner. She didn’t just pull off the greatest comeback in music history – she invented the whole concept of the comeback as we know it today. She became a solo superstar when she was 44. Things like that simply don’t happen. That’s how old Brandy, Usher, Adam Levine, and John Legend are right now. Tina Turner was just beginning. But nothing she faced could ever scare that grit out of her voice. She carried the whole story of American music in her voice, because in many ways, she was that story, and also a lot more. She was Anna Mae Bullock from Nutbush, Tennessee, daughter of sharecroppers, fighting her way in and out of the Chitlin’ Circuit. She was just a kid when she got famous, as half of Ike and Tina Turner. Her deep-country voice and his guitar always made a fearsome combo in early hits like “It’s Gonna Work Out Fine” and “I Idolize You.” “The emotions I expressed were real because I lived those feelings,” she wrote in a 2019 essay in *Rolling Stone*. “Even ‘Private Dancer’ – which seems to be about prostitution, but is also about wishes, hopes, and dreams – tells the story of women like me, caught up in sad situations, who somehow find a way to go on.”

Her defining hit was “What’s Love Got to Do With It,” which shocked radio audiences in 1984 between Madonna, Prince, and Cyndi Lauper. Unlike anyone else near her age, she had zero interest in passing for young. This woman had lived. She’d stared down more hard times

than your miserable Smiths-loving teenage mind could imagine. She truly became Tina Turner in 1984, with *Private Dancer*. It was a new kind of rock blockbuster, shimmying over generational, racial, cultural, and musical boundaries. Lots of stars had claimed to be the Queen of Rock & Roll, but after *Private Dancer*, nobody came near that crown.

Tina’s life story turns on her escape from and triumph over her abusive marriage. Strange as it might seem today, she was one of the first stars to talk aloud about domestic violence. It’s easy to take for granted, partly because of the way she changed public awareness about spousal abuse. Hero worship for Tina Turner is practically an industry, yet we’re still underrating what she did. But part of her greatness is refusing to be the professional survivor the media wanted her to be. She didn’t need another hero.

When her life story became the Angela Bassett movie *What’s Love Got to Do With It*, she couldn’t bring herself to watch it. As she wrote in *Rolling Stone*, “I never saw *What’s Love Got to Do With It* because I was too close to those painful memories.” She resisted the idea of the Broadway musical *Tina* for the same reason, saying, “I didn’t feel like talking about that stuff from the past because it gave me bad dreams.” But she loved the musical when she saw it. She said, “I want to pass the baton, so to speak, to them, and anyone facing a challenge, so they leave the theatre standing proud, with their chests out and chins up, inspired to believe ‘I can do it.’” ®

‘TINA WAS SO PUNK’

BY BRITTANY HOWARD

TINA TURNER, TO me, is a living, breathing phoenix, a symbol of resurrection. A career like that, a successful career, where it all goes away and comes back bigger and stronger and brighter? That doesn’t happen very often. That’s what I love about Tina most. The music’s amazing. The performing is amazing, but this story arc of her incredible life – from food stamps to icon status, she never gave up.

The first time I saw Tina on television, my mom was like, “This is really important. You need to see this.” And it was legs, and hair, and running all over the place. It was ferocious. I’d never seen anything like it. For my mother, she symbolised power and strength. Because life for my mother wasn’t easy. A lot of pain, a lot of heartbreak, a lot of suffering. And Tina stood out to all of the women who were going through that.

I want to actually see more older, wiser people getting their chance to tell their story in popular media. Seeing Tina in my life from such a young age – a woman acting like that, singing like that, sweating, and having muscles, having no care in the world, and having this freedom – I know what that did for me as a young girl, and then as I was growing into a woman.

She was obviously the best part of Ike and Tina. That song “Funkier Than a Mosquito’s Tweeter” is my jam because she’s talking all this smack about Ike. He could have wrote any of them songs for anybody else and it would’ve been nothing to really marvel at. But because you got Tina in the mix, that’s what turns those songs on.

A Black woman singing rock & roll was hugely inspiring to me as someone who also wants to express myself in a loud, bold way. As a performer, I was inspired by Tina taking up all of that space as a Black woman: taking risks, paying no mind, finding her freedom. She didn’t need any validation. She was powerful. It was subversive as hell. It was so punk. She was more rock & roll than rock & roll even knew what to do with. Here’s this Black woman, muscular and strong, just absolutely wiping the floor with everyone else. That’s badass, and courageous. ®

PAUL BERGEN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



LAST DANCE

"I want to pass the baton to anyone facing a challenge," Turner said. "So they are inspired to believe 'I can do it.'"

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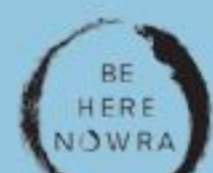
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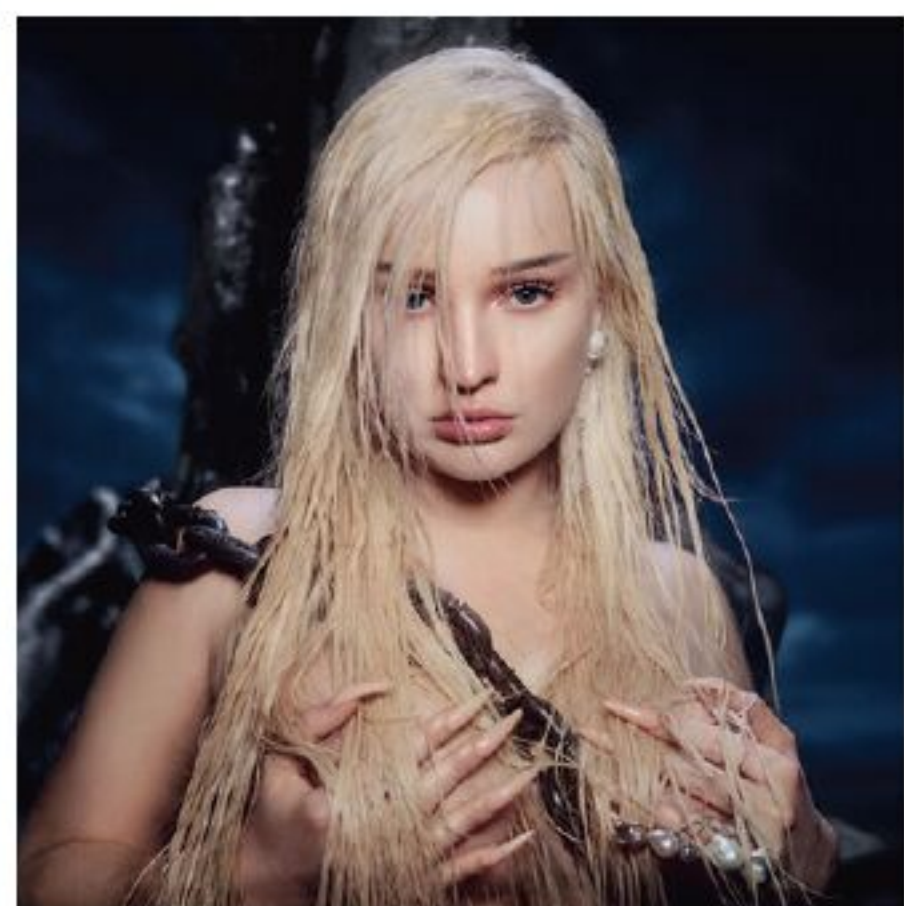
Reviews

Music

KIM PETRAS MAKES HER BIG MOVE

One of pop's most interesting artists polishes her weird edges to go for radio-ready gold

BY BRITTANY SPANOS



Kim Petras

Feed the Beast

REPUBLIC

IT HAS TAKEN Kim Petras fifteen years to get a debut album out. In the interim, the German singer-songwriter's steady rise has made her one to watch among pop artists: Her "Era 1" singles, released from 2017 to 2019, were a cool homage to fizzy 2000s bubblegum pop, and her pair of Halloween-themed mixtapes were edgy, spooky fun. Earlier this year, Petras became the first trans artist to have a Number One hit, with her Sam Smith collaboration "Unholy."

But the journey to *Feed the Beast* hasn't been all Champagne and glitter. ➔

ILLUSTRATION BY
Nigel Buchanan



➔ KIM PETRAS

Her continued work with Dr. Luke has been troublesome to many music fans, due to accusations of sexual assault and abuse that have kept the producer locked in an ongoing legal battle with Kesha. Then, after signing to a major label in 2021, Petras' original debut album, *Problematic*, was scrapped entirely and eventually leaked.

Petras has described her new release as her most "personal" work to date, a project forsaking the characters she embodied on her *Turn Off the Lights* Halloween projects or even last year's *Slut Pop* EP.

But somehow this album feels like we've gotten even further from who Petras is creatively, losing the weird magnetism and spark that made her past eras feel so fun and against the grain.

Largely, Petras' new material seems heavily inspired by Nineties house and Europop. Lead single "Alone," featuring a surprisingly low-energy Nicki Minaj guest verse, samples Alice DeeJay's 1999 hit "Better Off Alone," adding unnecessary trap hi-hats into the mix. Much of the album is comprised of similarly cheap ploys for radio and TikTok play, making the often trendsetting Petras a copy of many copies. Tracks like "King of Hearts" and "Claws" sound like an onslaught of overpriced vodka sodas: watered down and indiscernible from the next one.

It's not all bad news: "Coconuts," released last year, is still a sunshine-y bop. "Revelations" features a steely bit of Eighties guitar and a chorus that feels like a nod to her spooky-pop history. While most of the songs are extremely horny, "Sex Talk" and "Hit It From the Back" are the sexiest of the sex songs, commendable for their directness and sense of humour.

"Minute" exudes some of that vulnerability Petras promised from the album: It's a straightforward yearning love song about wanting someone to stay just a little longer. Meanwhile, "uh oh" is a classic Petras party track. She sings "Everything I drop is a banger" on the chorus, which is true of the song but falls flat when thinking of the rest of the album.

Of course, even the weaker songs have their dance-floor potential. Petras is, above all else, a fan of pure pop music and the feeling it exudes. But in chasing her new status as the type of pop star who has Top 40 potential, she abandoned the freakishly forward-thinking personality that built her a base to begin with. Here, the beast has been tamed. Let's hope it doesn't stay subdued much longer. **R**

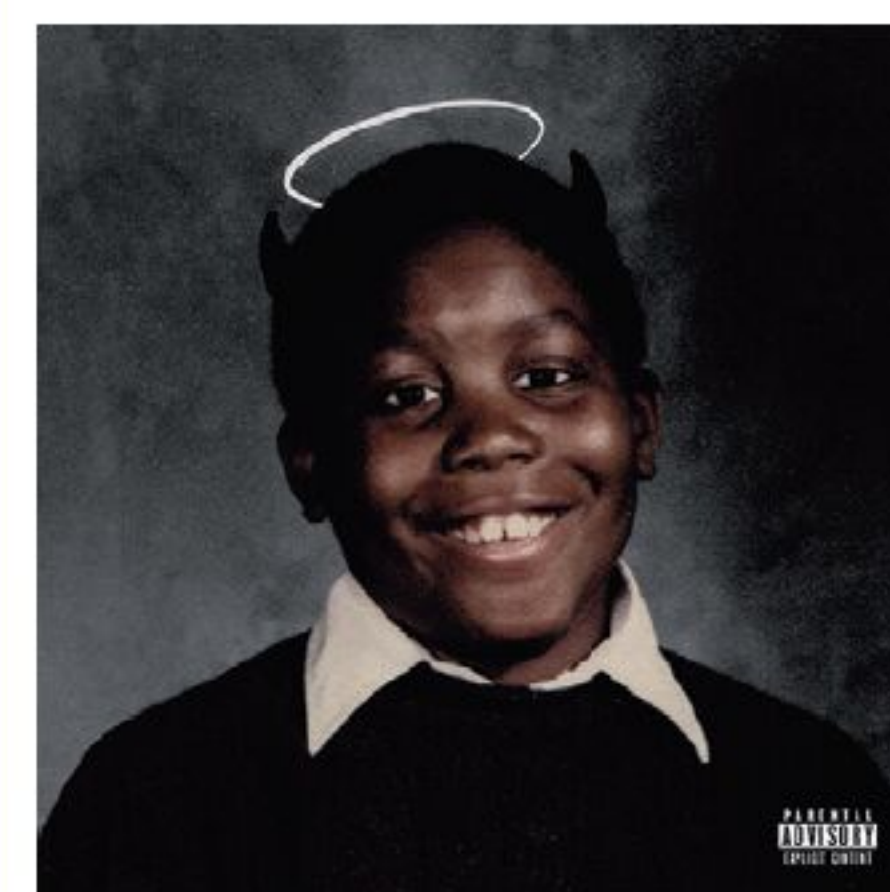
THE RETURN OF KILLER MIKE

The hard-hitting Atlanta rapper gets personal on his first album in 11 years By MOSI REEVES

IN THE AUGHTS, Killer Mike was a fiery maelstrom, the South's answer to Ice Cube, and an Atlanta polemicist comfortable with both dope-boy fantasies and bruising Black politics. But it's been eleven years since *R.A.P. Music*, a classic pairing with rapper-producer El-P that inspired the two to form the world-conquering duo Run the Jewels. On his sixth album, *Michael*, the rapper focuses on his personal life, with uncharacteristic empathy and restraint, even as he continues to utilise his uniquely brusque vocal style.

Michael is a collaboration with No I.D., the Chicago producer and label exec known not only for his Nineties classics with Common, but also for adding flourishes to recent epics like Jay-Z's *4:44* and Vince Staples' *Summertime '06*. His maximalist impulses result in a cascade of gospel cries and church-y organs. A panoply of guests lends a hand, from El-P on "Don't Let the Devil" to Young Thug on "Run." There are some welcome surprises, including a rare André 3000 cameo (alongside Future, no less) on "Scientists & Engineers."

All of these celebrity guests, spiritual uplift, and florid old-soul samples may be anathema to hardcore rap fans. Meanwhile, anyone waiting for Mike to explain his increasingly complicated politics, and how he went from Bernie fan to supporting Georgia's GOP governor, will have to make do with the undeniably thrilling, yet frustratingly vague, "Talkn' That Shit!" "Niggas talk to



Killer Mike

Michael

GRIND TIME OFFICIAL

pregnancy. "They call it adolescence 'cause we learnin' adult lessons," he observes. The fact that Mike now portrays abortion as a simple matter of life and health will be a shock to those who remember him accusing Planned Parenthood of "planning miscarriages" on Run the Jewels' "A Christmas Fucking Miracle."

"It is evident I do better when I feel like the world against me and think I should never win," he raps on "Two Days." Yet it's clear that *Michael* is written by a musician, activist and, uh, landlord at the height of fame and personal growth. Some will understandably feel that his journey to the mountaintop was more interesting than the winner's circle he sits comfortably in now. It's all grist for a man who stays "high and holy," haters be damned. **R**

me about that woke-ass shit/Same niggas walkin' on some broke-ass shit," he raps over a memorably grimy beat from DJ Paul of Three 6 Mafia and TWhy Xclusive.

Despite the sometimes-overwrought musical backdrop, Killer Mike remains an incisive and compelling lyricist who confidently takes *Michael* into unexpected places. On "Slummer," he describes how a teenage romance led to an unforeseen

Quick Hits

Six new albums you need to know about now



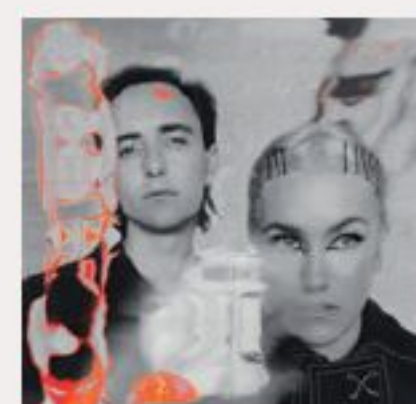
**Teen Jesus and
the Jean Teasers**
I Love You
(DOMESTIC LALA)



This is (finally) the first album from Teen Jesus and the Jean Teasers, and they have not disappointed with their first longer project. *I Love You* has plenty of the hard-hitting anthems the band has forged its identity around, but there's also pleasing depth, variety and maturity to the slower burning tunes that are executed with conviction and a whole lot of heart. **ZANDA WILSON**



Foley
Crowd Pleaser
(NETTWERK)



Aotearoa's current Y2K-era pop movement is being kicked into overdrive thanks to Foley. The duo turn things up a notch following 2021's *Vacation* EP with this debut effort. Foley show off their production chops with a synth-driven pop-sugar rush. Standout tracks "Killing Me Babe" and "What Got Into You" — which sounds like a cross between Betty Who, Dagny and vintage Pixie Lott — explore the complications of human connection. Sharp, analytical, and deeply confessional, *Crowd Pleaser* reminds you of the kind of trouble you welcome with open arms. **POPPY REID**



Thy Art Is Murder
Godlike
(IND)



Thy Art Is Murder are built from the heaviest stuff, they're massive in their space, and they're ours. *Godlike* screams in your face and doesn't relent, chewing up and spitting out themes that are scarring this world. "Join Me in Armageddon" and "Destroyer of Dreams" are punches to the face you didn't realise you needed. Formed in Sydney, Thy Art Is Murder has cracked the Top 10 on the ARIA Charts and found fans around the globe; their 2023 European tour is selling out with multiple venue upgrades. *Godlike* is the metal band's first fully-independent album release. **LARS BRANDLE**



Georgia Mooney
Full of Moon
(NETTWERK)



This album is not going to work as background noise. From its opening bars, the first song "War Romance" cuts through, drawing your ears and attention away from whatever else you were doing. Then May's haunting voice takes over, "*Dear circumstance, it always starts with you...*" It feels like the music, and in particular the vocals, are all around you, which is both intoxicating and a little unnerving. **VIVIANNE KELLY**



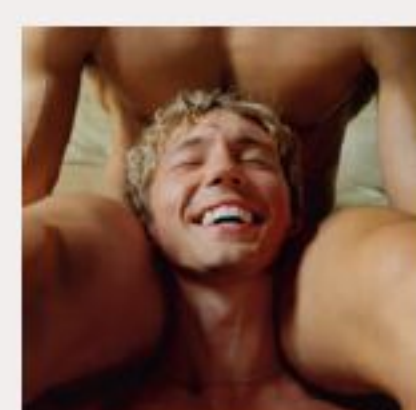
SAFIA
**A Lover's Guide to
a Lucid Dream**
(WARNER MUSIC AUSTRALIA)



Nobody treads the line between eerie and ethereal like Canberra trio SAFIA, who have nailed down an inimitable sonic quality that makes their music instantly recognisable. *A Lover's Guide to a Lucid Dream* is a record that's impossibly well-titled, pulling together themes of love, loss, and change — binding it all together in quirky and hypnotic soundscapes that are rather easy to lose yourself in. **ZANDA WILSON**



Troye Sivan
**Something to
Give Each Other**
(EMI MUSIC AUSTRALIA)



Troye Sivan's new era is about discovery of self, connection and a message of embracing your true self. Written all over the world with longtime collaborator Leland, the record oozes with warmth and confidence; it's an adoring love letter to read, and to give away. While first single "Rush" fast became his biggest solo hit to date, the standout track is "One Of Your Girls", a slick, brain-tickler about a chapter in Sivan's life involving straight-identifying men. Oscar Görres' production forms its sleek backbone, especially near its close, where an arpeggiated synth slams down beautifully in the final instrumental. **POPPY REID**





CLEMENTINE VALENTINE

BY CONOR LOCHRIE

You might recognise the voices behind Clementine Valentine, although you probably won't recognise the name. Formerly known as Purple Pilgrims, the dream-pop duo that once drew comparisons with Beach House, sisters Clementine and Valentine Nixon decided to perform under their birth names this year. On *The Coin That Broke the Fountain Floor*, the Nixon sisters rarely stray from the sonic palette of their former incarnation, which is far from a bad thing. Their debut album is a thing of quiet majesty, the songs sincerely affecting. Clementine Valentine possesses the rare ability to bring a listener to an immediate halt, worried as they are that they'll miss a tiny note in their gorgeous compositions. Their album sounds like the Cocteau Twins if they were transplanted to Aotearoa from Central Scotland, their gauzy shoegaze reduced into glistening art-pop gems. Lead single "Endless Night" remains the standout, a perfectly paced track that finds the sisters raising their voices to the heavens, whispering barely audible mantras, searching for answers. *The Coin That Broke the Fountain Floor* is Clementine Valentine fully themselves, in name and in art.



CLEMENTINE VALENTINE

The Coin That Broke the Fountain Floor

(Flying Nun Records)

★★★★★



G FLIP

BY VIVIENNE KELLY

G Flip is having a moment. Well, many moments. Whether it was their electric performance at last year's Splendour in the Grass – almost enhanced, not hampered, by their broken hand – or their headline-stealing video clip for "Get Me Outta Here". But it's not G Flip's injuries or image we should be paying attention to. Instead, it's their new album, the follow-up to 2020's *About Us*. If not image or injuries, the focus with G Flip is often on their incredible drumming skills, so it's fitting this release is called *Drummer*. The album also puts G's powerful vocals on display, whether it's through the pained "The Worst Person Alive", or the passionate "Be Your Man". The album showcases G Flip's range and rawness, and will likely further cement them as an Australian talent the world is talking about.

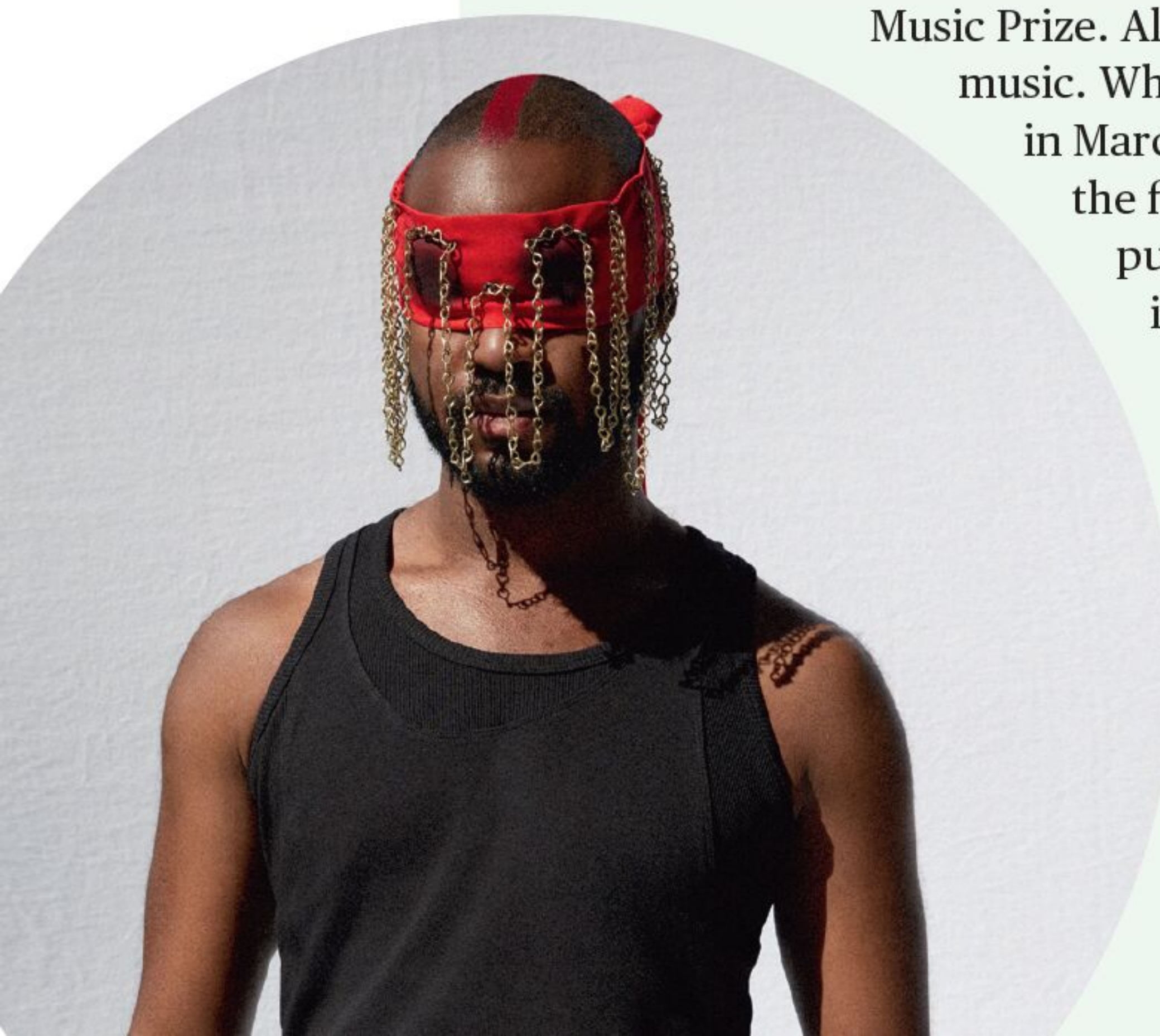


G FLIP

Drummer

(Future Classic)

★★★★★



GENESIS OWUSU

BY LARS BRANDLE

Genesis Owusu can do it all. The Ghana-born Canberran made his presence felt in a big way with his 2021 debut *Smiling with No Teeth*, an album that was so critically-adored, he must surely have run out of space to display his collection of trophies. *Smiling with No Teeth* never set the charts alight, but oh boy did it collect hardware. The J Award for Australian Album of the Year, ARIA Awards, the Australian Music Prize. All of them. Those talents extend beyond music. When he played Sydney's Enmore Theatre in March 2022, Owusu made the earth move – the floor split and threatened to swallow punters. Things happen when Genesis is in the house. *Struggler* is the long-awaited follow-up. Like its predecessor, *Struggler* doesn't ask to be pigeonholed, and doesn't care about your format. From the opening notes of lead single "Leaving The Light" and its synthwave powersource, Owusu is the master of all things. "That's Life (A Swamp)" fuses funk and jazz, "See Ya There" is

a sweet slice of neo-soul, "Freak Boy" is a slap in the face from an indie-kid with an attitude. Where *Smiling with No Teeth* is a rumination on racism and depression, set to a dynamite soundtrack, *Struggler* is, as the title suggests, a musical take on that journey through the other side, through the struggle. Though the collection is inspired by a close friend's own difficult journey, Owusu's unique handle of punk and funk makes this a thrilling ride. It's a sonic theme-park, recorded in



GENESIS OWUSU

Struggler


(Ourness)

★★★★★

the US and Australia, with a cast of top producers. *Struggler* captures a sound that could be from anywhere, anytime, and deserves the widest of audiences.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY **Michelle Grace Hunder**



Ford cracks the whip once again.

Movies

NO TIME FOR THIS MESS, DR. JONES!

Harrison Ford is back as the tomb raider with the hat and whip, but this nostalgia trip is a major slog

By DAVID FEAR

INDIANA JONES has fought a lot of screen villains, from Nazis to death-cult high priests. *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* – the fifth movie to feature Harrison Ford’s globe-trotting, snake-hating, whip-cracking, fedora-rocking archeology professor – pits our man Indy against the greatest nemesis he’s ever faced: time. Oh, there’s Nazis here, too. Ditto shady government agents and your usual assorted thugs. But the latest adventure of Steven Spielberg’s throwback hero is centered around the idea that no one can fight the passing of the years. You either die an intellectual-property hero trapped in amber, or you live long enough to see yourself riding a fake horse against a green-screened subway background in your eighties.

But first, *Dial of Destiny* whisks us back to 1944.

There’s a digitally de-aged Jones, looking as if he’d just found the Ark of the Covenant mere hours before. Both the archaeologist and German professor Jürgen Voller (Mads Mikkelsen) are after the Antikythera, a.k.a. Archimedes’ Dial. They’ve found one half of it. Whoever nabs both halves wins World War II. There’s an undeniable rush to seeing the *Raiders*-era Jones/Ford replicated so faithfully, skirting the edge of the uncanny valley yet never plummeting into it. Director James Mangold (*Logan*) has studied Spielberg’s playbook like a holy scroll, coordinating interlocking set pieces to the sound of John Williams’ iconic theme with the precision of a massive game of Mouse Trap. And then, like a giant boulder unleashed from its underground perch, everything rapidly rolls downhill from there.

Cut to 1969, and Jones is

being forced into retirement. A young woman approaches him, asking questions about the dial. She’s Helena Shaw (Phoebe Waller-Bridge), a.k.a. Indy’s goddaughter, and she thinks she knows where both halves are. Meanwhile, Voller – now designing rockets for America – is also hunting for the artefact. Along with CIA operatives and an acolyte from Alabama (Boyd Holbrook), he’s determined to find out what Helena knows. Because once the two halves are joined,

it’s no longer just a golden ancient whatsit – it’s a time machine.

Movies can be time machines, too, of course, something that Spielberg and George Lucas knew when they hashed out what would become *Raiders of the Lost Ark* trying to bring back the giddiness they felt as kids watching old 1930s serials and ended up setting the tone for 1980s blockbusters. *Dial of Destiny* transports viewers back to the dying days of WWII and the late Sixties, but what it really wants to

Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny


STARRING Harrison Ford
Phoebe Waller-Bridge
Mads Mikkelsen
Boyd Holbrook
Toby Jones

DIRECTED BY James Mangold

do is drop you right back into 1981, when seeing Harrison Ford pull himself over and under a moving truck felt like 10 cc’s of pure, uncut excitement. Mangold is chasing after a different treasure: that sense of wonder you got watching that first Indiana Jones adventure. He’s a raider of a lost art form.

That remembrance of Saturday matinees past is there in *Dial of Destiny*. Until it very much isn’t, and you’re left with what you imagine you’d get if you programmed a 21st-century AI program to write up nostalgia bait for the children of the late 20th century. It’s not all bad: There are scattered moments of wit and old-school Hollywood-blockbuster pleasure here and there. The rapport between the odd coupling of Ford and Waller-Bridge occasionally gives the movie a screwball jolt. Mikkelsen does for screen Nazis what he did for Bond villains. There are zero crystal skulls in it.

Should you try to escape the creeping sensation of familiar-face cameos and callbacks, however – Easter eggs! Why’d it have to be Easter eggs!?! – you’ll wonder why all of this business seems so frenetic without feeling like it’s that fun. There are needs being met here, but they aren’t storytelling-based so much as stoking-the-fan-base and meeting-the-bottom-line ones. Ford still has the fortitude to play the part. But having him show up to crack whips and crack wise in the name of bringing back that old Indy magic isn’t enough of an excuse to have him don the fedora one last time. “Things move forward,” one character tells Jones. “And sometimes, they move backward.” They may have turned the dial a little too much on the last part. ®



Waller-Bridge plays Indy’s goddaughter.

Olyphant's Raylan Givens goes on the hunt.

TV

THE GRIZZLED GUNSLINGER IS BACK

The cops and criminals of FX's 'Justified' return to a changed world that's more dangerous than ever

By ALAN SEPINWALL

IN THE FIRST episode of the new miniseries *Justified: City Primeval*, our old friend Raylan Givens (Timothy Olyphant) – the quick-drawing, fast-talking, Stetson-wearing U.S. marshal from Harlan, Kentucky – is called to testify about a fugitive he brought back to Detroit. Defence attorney Carolyn Wilder (Aunjanue Ellis) calls him out for having threatened to put her client in the trunk of a car if he didn't behave. This is the kind of stunt Raylan pulled all the time during the original run of *Justified*, and we found it charming as all get-out back then. But it's been eight years since we last saw him, and public attitudes about cops – particularly cops who like to bend the law to their own whims – have changed a whole lot over that time.

So here is Raylan, being questioned by a Black

lawyer, in front of a Black judge, regarding his treatment of a Black suspect, and suddenly his familiar shenanigans don't feel quite so cute, do they?

Most TV revivals fail creatively because great shows are a product of a particular moment in time for both the characters and the audience. The few that work (like *The Connors*) do so because they acknowledge how the passage of time has changed the people on screen, and those of us watching them. *City Primeval* very smartly does this, finding ways to recontextualize Raylan's behaviour, while still managing to tell an entertaining yarn about him and a colourful collection of supporting characters.

The new show is adapted from a 1980 novel by Raylan's creator, Elmore Leonard, though the book featured a different hero. Set primarily in the

Motor City, it finds Raylan pursuing Clement Mansell (Boyd Holbrook from *Narcos*), the self-styled "Oklahoma Wildman" who keeps getting away with various murders through a combination of luck, force of will, and Carolyn's legal gifts. For the moment, the series has swapped one Boyd (Raylan's archnemesis Boyd Crowder) for another, and Holbrook's swagger proves an excellent match for Olyphant's. Mansell is more vicious than your average *Justified* baddie, but as his girlfriend Sandy (Adelaide Clemens) acknowledges, "He's fun."

Years ago, Raylan was introduced manoeuvring a bad guy into a situation where he could

Justified: City Primeval

NETWORK	Disney+
AIR DATE	July 19
STARRING	Timothy Olyphant Boyd Holbrook Aunjanue Ellis Adelaide Clemens Vondie Curtis-Hall Vivian Olyphant

legally get away with using lethal force, and opportunities to play judge, jury, and executioner appear often in the original run. But his sensibilities have evolved and relaxed with age; when a Detroit cop suggests arranging for the local Albanian mob to take out Mansell, Raylan is indignant, insisting the goal should be to put their target into a tiny prison cell for a very long time. His famous temper still lurks, though, especially when Mansell approaches

Raylan's daughter Willa (played by Olyphant's own daughter Vivian). The difference this time is that other people call him out on it, like when Carolyn acknowledges he's right to be mad. But he's also a middle-aged white man with a badge and a gun, and, she adds, "Everybody doesn't get to be angry the way you do."

With the old supporting cast left behind in Kentucky, original series vets Dave Andron and Michael Dinner have assembled an impressive new ensemble to flank Olyphant and Holbrook. Ellis makes Carolyn into one of the best foils Raylan has ever had, Clemens makes you understand why Sandy is both attracted to and terrified of Mansell, and Vondie Curtis-Hall is incredibly charismatic and poignant as Sweetie, a musician turned bar owner whose criminal past leaves him unfortunately tied to Mansell. In her first screen role, Vivian Olyphant is a mixed bag, though her awkward weirdness feels very true for a teenager in almost any circumstance, let alone one who's been dragged along to a strange city while her father leads a manhunt.

City Primeval is based on a 43-year-old story, and some of the artefacts of that can feel clunky, like Mansell's fixation on cassette tapes. But it also feels very of the moment in a way that, well, justifies bringing back such a beloved, complex, appealing character many years later. Late in the story, Raylan makes a choice that exasperates one of his new friends. "God-dammit, Raylan," Carolyn exclaims. "Yeah," he admits, "I get that a lot." ®



Holbrook's baddie glares.

ESSAY

Are Queer Stories Boxed in on TV

After strides in the 2010s, LGBTQ representation has stalled. Here's why television needs to break out of the rut

By EMILY ST. JAMES

IN A PIVOTAL SCENE in the Disney+ Star Wars series *Andor*, two lovers reconnect in a bar. Cinta has taken a job in said bar to monitor the home of the woman who raised Cassian Andor, the resistance fighter of the series' title. He's currently in jail, but Cinta doesn't know that. She's dedicated to the Rebellion and willing to wait as long as it takes.

Then, her girlfriend, Vel, arrives. The portrayal of Vel and Cinta's relationship in earlier episodes has given the audience a sense of how comfortable the two are with each other. The love between them is deep and old. Vel tries to persuade Cinta to leave her post behind and go somewhere the two can be together. Cinta resists. For her, the struggle to topple the Empire will always come first. Yes, she loves Vel, and she likely always will. But there's a war to be won, and until it is, the pair will never be free to simply live their lives.

Vel and Cinta were my favourite queer characters introduced in the 2022-23 TV season, even though they were relatively minor in the full sweep of what *Andor* was trying to accomplish. Their central choice between continuing the fight or going off to live a quiet life together stands in not

just for the conversations so many queer Americans I know are having right now, but also for the twin approaches TV has to telling queer stories.

For the most part, American TV rarely tells queer stories that don't break out of two very specific boxes.

The first stretches back to the spate of gay supporting characters tossed into seemingly every late-Nineties sitcom, like Carter on *Spin City*, or Stanford on *Sex and the City*. That is, among an ensemble cast of characters, there are one or two who are queer, usually gay or lesbian characters who are often in committed relationships that largely occur offscreen, or bisexual characters whose sexuality might come up in a storyline or two, but who usually end up in a heterosexual relationship when all is said and done.

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT ONSCREEN

Clockwise from top: *Yellowjackets*' Van and Tai, Uncle Clifford of *P-Valley*, Ellie and Riley Abel from *The Last of Us*, *Andor*'s Vel and Cinta, Jacob from *Abbott Elementary*, and Sabi from *Sort Of*.

Think Jacob on *Abbott Elementary* for the former, or Keeley on *Ted Lasso* for the latter.

The stories on these shows take efforts to make the characters' queerness part of the world of the show but rarely centre it. There is immense value in this, to be clear. That *Abbott*, one of the most popular shows on TV right now, has a gay character in a committed, interracial relationship with another man normalises queer identities for viewers who might not know many queer people in their lives. At the same time, Jacob is a relatively safe portrayal of homosexual love. You could drop his relationship into a show from 15 years ago without breaking a sweat.

The second approach to telling queer stories on American TV stems from shows popular in the mid-2010s, notably the



PHOTOGRAPHS USED IN ILLUSTRATION: FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: JASPER SAVAGE/HBO; KALEY SCHWARTZ/SHOWTIME; CURTIS BAKER/STARZ; GILLES MINGASSON/ABC; LIANE HENTSCHER/HBO; 2022 LUCASFILM LTD

Prime Video series *Transparent*. These stories tend to place queer characters at their centre in some fashion, and they are often about the day-to-day lives of queerness. They're also usually lower-budget half-hour series that take a more contemplative look at life. They're often among the best on TV, yet they're very much aimed at a niche audience; low-conflict contemplation has never sent ratings soaring.

Increasingly, these shows also tend to be imports. The HBO Max series *Sort Of*, out of Canada, offers one of the few times TV has attempted to centre nonbinary characters in an ongoing series. Similarly, the Netflix series *Heartstopper* (about teen boys falling for each other) and *Feel Good* (about a budding queer romance and one character gradually coming out as nonbinary) both have their roots in the U.K.

Good TV can come from anywhere, and deep-pocketed American companies like Netflix can make sure these shows continue to get made. It's always been difficult to make shows like this in the American TV industry, but some data suggests that in the 2020s, that difficulty has only grown.

GLAAD's annual survey of LGBTQ representation on television found a dispiriting stagnance in the 2022-23 TV season, which ran from June 1, 2022, to May 31, 2023. In that time frame, TV featured 596 queer characters, compared with 637 in the 2021-22 season, a decline of 6.4 percent. Now, according to GLAAD's data, the 2021-22 TV season saw several historic highs for queer representation on TV, with nearly 12 percent of all characters on scripted broadcast prime-time TV being LGBTQ and the number of queer characters on scripted cable increasing by 20 percent. So perhaps a mild downturn was inevitable. Plus, measuring representation solely by numbers ignores that one show offering rich, textured stories about

the queer experience is worth a dozen that have token queer characters.

Still, that slight downturn underscores a very real fear many LGBTQ people have that studios might scale back the stories they tell about us in response to a political environment that seems to turn a little more queerphobic by the day. Queer people will never disappear from television entirely, yet it's not hard to imagine entertainment companies, which have so often shied away from political controversy, easing up on the number of queer stories told or continuing to relegate us to supporting roles. When so much acceptance of queer identities in the U.S. has been tied to film and television normalising our lives for the masses, a world where we are once again reduced to window dressing onscreen would be a disappointing one indeed.

That's why it's so frustrating to see so many queer characters still stuck in the same boxes TV has relegated us to for so long. In spite of that, though, there are promising signs, especially in prestige dramas. Vel and Cinta might have been supporting players in *Andor*, but their storyline tapped into the arguments many queer couples are having as our identities become ever more politicised. The doomed love story between teenagers Tai and Van on *Yellowjackets* explores the ways trauma can intersect with queer romance, and on *The Last of Us*, the story of fellow traumatised teen Ellie offers a surprisingly grounded look at growing up queer in the fungal apocalypse.

Uncle Clifford on Starz's terrific *P-Valley* provides a look not just at a life lived well outside traditional gender roles, but also at how the character's Blackness intersects with her gender identity. And over on the Hallmark Channel – the Hallmark Channel! – the soapy series *Ride* isn't just featuring a gay rodeo cowboy but

forthrightly exploring what it means to be gay in that environment.

There's good stuff happening on kids TV, too. On *Muppet Babies*, no less a luminary than Gonzo gave kids a space to consider gender expression when putting on a dress to become Gonzo-rella, while the new Marvel series *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur* features trans characters in its regular supporting cast. And almost no show on TV was more ambitious in portraying queer identities than the (sadly cancelled) animated kids series *The Owl House*, which put a relationship between two girls front and centre and celebrated so many different forms of queerness.

These signs are all promising ones. Perhaps the minor decrease GLAAD noted was just a brief pause before TV starts telling ever-bolder stories about queer people. Yes, any queer character on any show on TV helps to continue making America aware of our existence, but I want so much more than the boxes TV has sorted us into. Why is it still so rare to see stories about queer people of colour and especially trans people of colour? (Yes, *Pose* filled that void for a time, but it's no longer on the air.) Why, when TV shows trans people at all, does it still rely so heavily on trans women, instead of trans people from all across the gender spectrum? Why not more stories about working-class queer people? Or polyamorous queer people? Or older queer people?

To be queer, often, is to feel like something inside yourself doesn't match up with what society insists should be true. The process of learning to listen to that part of yourself can be an arduous one, but a medium like television can make that inner voice a little louder with every new queer story it tells. In the face of a terrifying political environment for LGBTQ people, here's hoping TV makes like Cinta and fights even harder. 🏳️‍🌈

QUEER TV GONE TOO SOON

These canceled shows did representation right.

The Owl House **DISNEY**
A winning kids show with a queer lead fighting monsters.

A League of Their Own **PRIME VIDEO**
The queer-friendly movie adaptation will end after Season Two.

Reboot **HULU**
A meta-comedy with a lesbian lead.

BEHIND THE

Rolling Stone AU/NZ

COVER

WITH Poppy Reid



LISTEN
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Samuel L. Jackson

The 'Secret Invasion' star on AI, awards, and the Republican Party

The big news in Hollywood is the writers strike. How do you feel about it?

Writers deserve to be paid – and deserve to be paid fairly. Let's see if they can get some equity.

The SAG strike is looming as well. Tom Hanks recently discussed his fears about AI, and how the studios may produce work featuring someone after they've passed.

Jackson stars in 'Secret Invasion,' streaming now on Disney+.

People just started worrying about that? I asked about that a long time ago. Ever since I did *Captain Marvel* and they de-aged me, it's like, "Well, I guess they can do this anytime they want to do it, if they really want to!"

When I get a contract and it has the words "in perpetuity" and "known and unknown" on it, I cross that shit out. It's my way of saying, "No, I do not approve of this."

What music moves you the most?

I like rock music – I was sort of a hippie during the Sixties – and in the Seventies, when I was in Atlanta, there was this Black rock band called Mother's Finest. I listen to a lot of modern hip-hop also. Sometimes I'll turn on some spatial DJ on Apple Music to hear whatever's out there now. I'm pretty open to everything except country [laughs].

Let's talk *Secret Invasion*. Had you been pushing Marvel to give Nick Fury his own project for a while?

I actually have not. My biggest concern with Marvel was trying to keep them from killing me more than anything else [laughs]. I always wanted to tell the story about who Nick was before he had these superhero friends – when he lived in the shadow world as a spy, and how he connected with these people. *Secret Invasion* is not a superhero movie – it's gritty and dark.

When you first popped up as Nick Fury in *Iron Man*, did you think you'd play him for 15-plus years?

They told me they were giving me a nine-picture deal, and at the time, making nine pictures would've taken almost 10, 12 years. I had no idea that it would happen that quickly.

Was that a good nine-picture deal for you, or a bad Scottie Pippen-type deal?

Every deal was negotiable [laughs]. But there are things I wish I'd been in that I wasn't in, like *Civil War*. If the kids are fighting, why isn't Nick Fury there to send them to their rooms? They never explained that to me.

You'll be in *The Marvels* with Brie Larson, and you two are pals. She got so much hate for playing Captain Marvel from the more sexist side of Marvel's fan base. What was it like to see her go through that?

Brie's a stronger person than people give her credit for. These incel dudes who hate strong women, or the fact that she's a feminist who has an opinion and expressed it? Everybody wants people to be who they

want them to be. She is who she is.

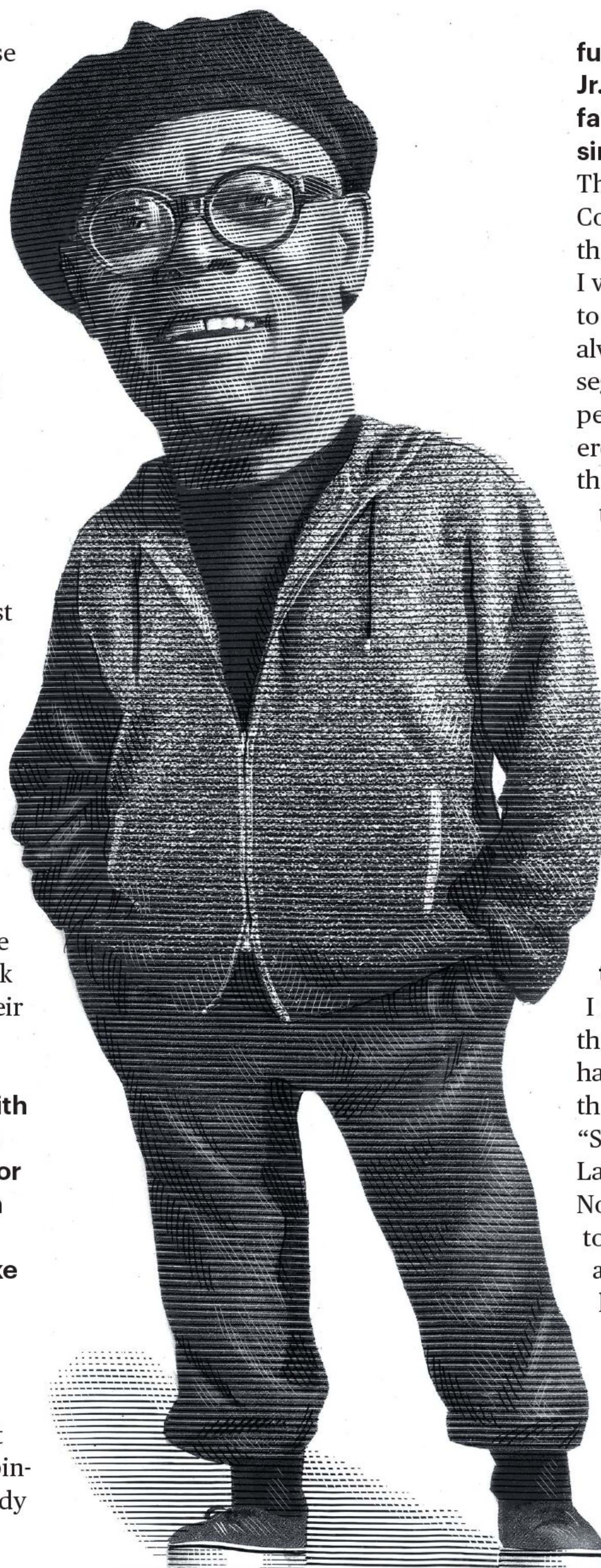
You were an usher at the funeral of Martin Luther King Jr. What was that like, and how far do you feel we've come since then?

The funeral was at Morehouse College. I was a student, and they asked students to help. I volunteered. The world seems to be in as hard a place as it's always been. When I grew up in segregation, I knew which white people didn't want to be bothered with me and I knew how they felt about me. I know how the Republicans feel about

me now because of what my mindset is. When I see Trump, I see the rednecks I saw when I was growing up who tried to keep me in my place. That's what the Republican Party is to me. They're doing it to young people, gay people. If you're not them, you're the enemy.

When I was a kid, I really wanted you to win the Oscar for *Pulp Fiction*.

I might be the only person in the history of those boxes they have up when they're calling the winner who actually said, "Shit." When they said "Martin Landau," I was like, "Aw, shit." Now, there was no reason for me to expect to win because every award show up to that point I had lost to Martin Landau. But who the fuck saw *Ed Wood*? That's neither here nor there at this point. The moment they're about to call your name, you think, "Maybe they're gonna get it right this time." MARLOW STERN



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NAYSLAYER

PACIFIC IPA



AVAILABLE NOW*